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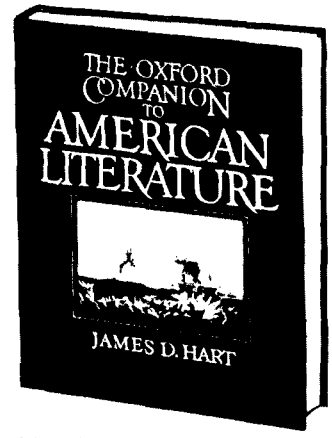

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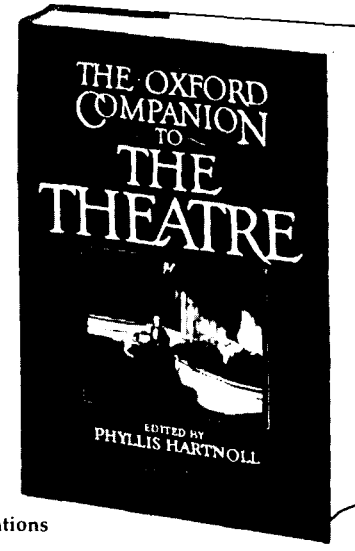

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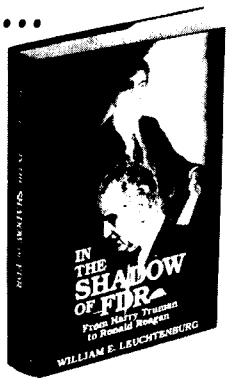

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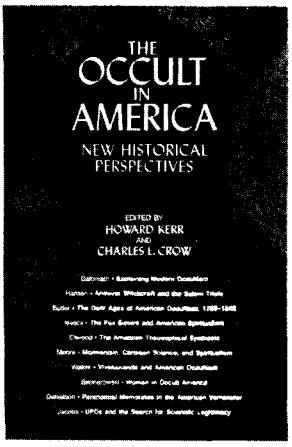

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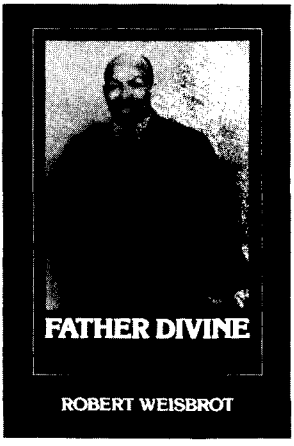

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Life and Letters . . . . . .

Let Us Now Praise Famous Knuckleheads

ARISTIDES

"I do not have ulcers, I give them," it was recently reported to me that a big-time New York lawyer is fond of saying. Always on the outlook for stealing if not a phrase then at least its rhythm, I thought, "I do not ask for recommendations, I write them." Mostly I write them for students seeking entry into graduate or professional schools, but occasionally I am called upon to do so for scholars seeking grants or writers looking for lodging in one or another literary hostelry. But in writing these recommendations I have often thought that, to return to the lawyer's bareknuckle phrase, I would prefer to have ulcers. Begun in insincerity and ending in doubt, these recommendations tend to give me a bad conscience—the ulcers, you might say, of the intellectual life.

I believe I have mastered the form all right. Of students I say that they are "intelligent, industrious, and imaginative." I note that they are "mature beyond their years." I salt my recommendations with pert phrases and happy buzz words: I refer to scholars as "creative" and to writers as "serious." This sort of thing is, I assume, what is wanted. Calm language and measured estimates, given the hyped-up atmosphere in which we now live, can only serve to squash a claimant's hopes in the minds of unthinking admissions officers and directors of endowments and grant boards. Imagine yourself a member of the admissions committee of the Stanford Business School starting to read a recommendation of mine, written with the difficult intent of accuracy, that begins: "Miss Carol Throckmorton, who has been a student of mine, is a reasonably intelligent young woman with a fairly clear mind." With a recommendation like that, and a good deal of luck, poor Miss Throckmorton may be able to get onto the waiting list of a mediocre beautician's school.

My small problem is of course part of a much larger problem—the problem of the inflation and subsequent debasement of praise, to the point where praise has lost almost all value and requires, if it is to be noticed at all, a great deal of pumping up. The general debasement of praise has been going on for a very long while. Raymond Chandler, in letters he wrote in the late 1930s, spoke of the depreciation of praise in his time. But so far has this debasement gone that praise must now be shouted to be heard. Not that in the world today there is any scarcity of megaphones. Thus, announcers on my local FM classical music station—men who regularly refer to the most sublime works of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven in a tone of voice best described as "cultivated blasé"—in reading the advertising for a contemporary avant-garde play must abruptly shift the gears of their larynxes to claim that this play "kicks us in the guts and the soul and entertains us at the same time." Now a kick in the guts I can understand, though it is not my idea of a pleasant night on the town. But you would think a "kick in the soul" ought to be reserved for dramatists of the caliber of Sophocles and greater.

Not long ago I came up against the problem of praise when called upon to write about Marguerite Yourcenar, a novelist I greatly admire and whose books I feel have been inadequately appreciated. Should I describe Mme Yourcenar as "brilliant," which, as it happens, her books often are? Unfortunately, the word "brilliant" has been used up. Students are now called "brilliant"; Norman Mailer is "brilliant." What about "masterful," which, when she is writing well, she also can be? No, sorry, "masterful" has been pressed into service to describe every other scribbler, dauber, and fiddler of our day, and consequently must now be retired. What about

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cutting out all these middlemen words of praise and simply calling her a "genius," then knocking off for lunch? Problems here again, I fear. Not only have people such as Woody Allen, Leonard Bernstein, and the Beatles been wrongly called "geniuses," but Marguerite Yourcenar is not a genius. She is merely—some "merely"—a very considerable and highly learned literary artist. *Brilliant, masterful, genius*—all these words have lost their absorbency; they no longer, as Virginia Woolf once said good words and phrases ought to do, soak up much truth. So I decided not to use any of these words in connection with Mme Yourcenar. Instead, when I came to write about her, I attempted, as carefully as I was able, to say what I thought it was that made her novels so good—and hoped that no one would take my essay, shorn as it was of praise spelled out in neon, for a put-down.

Praise has been called the least palling of the pleasures, and it was doubtless owing to this that powerful ancient rulers kept panegyrists at court. Does praise never pall? On the occasions when praise has come my way, I have shown remarkable patience and stamina while listening to or reading it. Yet praise is also a very delicate literary art. "Fulsome" is probably the adjective most frequently linked to the noun "praise"; still, praise can be underdone, especially praise directed at oneself. I was recently introduced to a couple who, I was told beforehand, were great admirers of my writing. When I shook the man's hand, he said, "You are so prolific," to which his wife added, "How do you manage to turn out so much?" And nothing further was said. Ah, thought I, but an unfixed female alley cat is prolific; and the ample boutonniere that is my ego sadly wilted.

The malicious would do well to learn the art of faint praise, though most faint praise let loose in the world is, I am sure, without malice aforethought. I recall coming across a book bearing a blurb citing its author as "surely among the best thirty or forty of our younger novelists." Do get back to me, I thought to tell the writer of that blurb, when you think this kid is among the best three or four of our older novelists. On the back of James Gould Cozzens's *Guard of Honor* I read, courtesy of a reviewer in the now-defunct *New York Herald-Tribune*, that this book is "the most skillfully constructed novel of 1948," and wonder if 1948 was a particularly good year for well-constructed novels. Of a poet named Charles Edward Eaton, author of a book of verse entitled *In the Land of the Thing King*, the critic Robert Boyers writes, "Increasingly one of our finest poets." Why is it I feel this blurb would have been more convincing if Boyers had written, "Decreasingly one of our worst poets"?

The passion for praise feeds upon itself. Praise may well be a narcotic of the kind that, once imbibed, calls for larger and larger doses. It has been said of a famous playwright and memoirist, a woman who when it comes to praise has over the years had a pretty good roll of the dice, that she is currently uninterested in anything less than a standing ovation. A still fairly young James Gould Cozzens, having won the O. Henry Prize for his short story "Total Stranger," wrote to his mother to mock such prizes, jokingly adding that "the reason I prefer to live as nearly like a recluse as possible is that I subconsciously know that people, the world, never would and never will greet my entrances into it with the reverent applause required for my pleasure and if I cannot have that I will not, in effect, play." But that reads to me like one of those jokes that, at bottom, just might be serious.

When one has had a little praise, the tendency is to get a bit sniffy about praise. A good friend not long ago wrote to praise some recent writings of mine, saying that I "must now be thought of as the Sammy Davis, Jr., of American letters." The praise was quite sincere, and meant to compliment me, I believe, for my energy and variety. I, however, wrote back to ask for an adjustment. Although Sammy Davis, Jr., is my co-religionist, I would be willing to pay anywhere from fifty to one hundred dollars on any given night simply *not* to see him perform. This being so, could he change his praise? A flexible man, my friend then dubbed me Sir John Max-Beerbohm Squire, an honor I accepted with large-hearted graciousness.

The best single piece of praise I have ever had came from a businessman I much admire who once remarked that I handled a matter of some complexity in a way he thought "very businesslike." Which is a reminder that the source of praise is of the utmost significance. Two dozen long-stemmed roses and a jeroboam of Piper-Heidsieck in recognition of

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one's achievements from the chairman of the American Nazi Party can scarcely bring satisfaction, unless of course one happens to be an American Nazi. Similarly, praise from people in no position to know the true nature of one's accomplishments, though better I suppose than contempt from the same quarter, isn't good enough to allay doubts about one's real worth, which is one of the things praise ought to do but seldom does.

Praise from one's peers is lovely, but praise from one's betters surpasses even it. Yet what if one doesn't have any betters? I can think of people who, in their respective fields, do not. I should imagine the only altogether satisfactory praise for I. I. Rabi, for example, would have to issue from Einstein or Niels Bohr; for Arnaldo Momigliano from Theodor Mommsen; for Edward Shils from Max Weber; for Oscar Peterson from Art Tatum. But perhaps these men no longer require much in the way of praise; perhaps by now they know their own worth. Still, my guess is that it is not their worth they dwell on but instead what they have not yet accomplished and still hope to.

Knowing one's own worth reminds me of a story I heard about a literary critic, a woman in her seventies, who, in approaching a foundation for a large grant, balked at the requirement of sending out recommendation forms. "I have been writing in public for nearly fifty years now," she is supposed to have said, "and if my quality isn't apparent by now it never will be." I think she is correct; her quality is apparent, and on the basis of it, if I were an official of that foundation, I should have turned down her application. But she has a point: she has been at work too long to be asked to go out and organize praise on her own behalf.

About this ingathering of one's own praise there is something more than a little unseemly. Yet in intellectual life it goes on more and more. A student must find teachers to praise him so that he may proceed to the next level of professional learning. A scholar in search of a grant must find fellow scholars to praise him. A writer, when he publishes a new book, is asked to submit the names of other writers who will supply praise for him that can be used in the form of blurbs on the dust jacket of his book. Thus, in the new praising era, one hand washes itself. One of the nice things about being a philanthropist, I should think, is that, when they come to honor you for your good works, at least you don't have to go out and fetch your own testimonials.

When the Kissing Had to Stop is the title of a novel by Constantine FitzGibbon that I have never read but that often comes to mind as I prop myself up to my typewriter to tap out yet another student recommendation. If this need for recommendations doesn't let up soon, I sometimes think that I shall be driven to candor. "Michael Goodman is a solid, industrious, and so far as I know honest enough young man," I feel myself wanting to write. "He is a bit dull, perhaps, yet I can predict with fair confidence that, no matter what group young Mr. Goodman is in, he will go right to the middle." Now that ought to render Goody a gone goose.

Although it may be a true enough assessment of this student's abilities, I cannot bring myself to write it. Let us say that young Mr. Goodman is applying to law school, and not to any of the top five or six law schools. How do I know that he won't be a quite decent lawyer? And if he turns out to be a mediocre one, well, the world is filled with mediocre lawyers—also mediocre doctors, architects, teachers, writers, and cooks—and worse than mediocre ones, too. Why should this student suffer from my somewhat sniffy high standards? Perhaps in the next office a colleague with more relaxed (let us call them "laid-back") standards might, at the very moment I am disqualifying the Goodman kid, be lying monstrously about the merits of a young man or woman even more mediocre than he? I don't, after all, keep a sign on my desk that reads: "Mr. and Mrs. Goodman's aspirations for their son Michael stop here." Instead I toss off two paragraphs of light praise, the usual effluvia, and rate Michael Goodman somewhere around the top eightieth percentile in intellectual ability, creativity, responsibility, leadership, and a few other qualities at which I should probably rate myself somewhere near the fiftieth percentile. If one day he turns out to be a public prosecutor, and I am on trial—for dereliction of duty, no doubt—perhaps he will recommend a gentle work-release program for me.

When did we first lose our grip on standards in this country? With the spread of higher education? With the institution of the auto-

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matic standard-of-living raise in jobs? With the onset of the psychological concern that no one go unpraised, however meager his talents? Not all of these are bad things, in and of themselves. Nor can I with a clear conscience come out for implacably, irretrievably high standards. Because its standards are not rigidly high, the United States is the country of the second chance, and that is not such a bad thing. As a boy who had a less than glittering academic adolescence, I know that, had I been born in England or France, where academic standards are set early in life, I should probably not have been permitted to go to university at all. Still, there is undeniably a problem here. The problem is how to give everyone a fair and decent chance without giving the game away.

The interim solution, and not a very successful one as far as I can determine, is to see to it that as many people as possible are passed through the portals—and praised on their way through. Praise has increasingly become one of the items on the lengthy list of modern entitlements, part of the revolution of rising psychological expectations. Yet at the same time that praise has become more widespread, it has become less good. There is, I suspect, a slightly snobbish element to praise: if everyone has it, who wants it? At Versailles, the duc de Saint-Simon informs us, the maréchal de Choiseul was so immensely pleased by being allowed by Louis XIV to become a member of the order that allowed him to wear a blue ribbon over his coat that, when wearing his ribbon, he could not refrain from gazing at himself in every mirror he passed. The maréchal continued to do so until the courtesan who called herself Mlle L'Enclos said to him one day, before a rather large gathering of courtiers, "Monsieur le Comte, if I catch you doing that again, I shall tell you the names of your fellow members." I was reminded of the poor maréchal the other day when a small but highly pleasing honor came my way in the form of my having a story I wrote selected for the anthology entitled *The Best American Short Stories, 1983*. The rub came when I learned—and not from Mlle L'Enclos—that among my fellow contributors to this volume are a number of writers whose work I actively dislike.

As for the simultaneous spread and inflation of praise, perhaps no better indication of it is available than in the continual pumping up of job titles. I first noted this a few decades ago when banks began to bestow the title of "junior vice-president" on some of their employees. What this meant, I took it, was that not to be a vice-president of some kind in a bank was nearly disgraceful. A non-vice-president in a bank will soon be rarer than a German without a doctorate. Something similar has begun to take place in academic life. Anyone who is not a full professor by his early forties is clearly becoming someone left by the wayside; and not to be the Ralph and Rita Raffles Double Distinguished Service Professor of All Human Sciences by fifty probably means you are a bust. Soon academic titles will be awarded with oak-leaf clusters.

The need for praise is greatest among people who do not know their own worth. This includes all but the tiniest minority of human beings. It also includes whole large categories of people. High on the list of the thousand neediest categories are students, who cannot know their own worth except through the judgment of their teachers. Yet praise for students, as for the young generally, ought to be applied delicately, with a very fine brush, lest its recipients start out in life with too high a valuation of themselves. Edith Wharton, in her memoir *A Backward Glance*, remarks how fortunate she was never to have been considered, by her parents or such teachers as she had, to be promising. It allowed her to develop in her own fashion. Meanwhile, most of the young men with whom she had grown up who had been considered promising seemed to suffer sadly at not being able to live up to their own highly touted promise. Among the students that I see, I can fairly quickly make out those who have had the fires of their youthful egos well stoked and banked with praise, and they are, by and large, not the most pleasant or interesting.

Artists are famously hungry for praise, with writers pushing themselves away from the table last of all. Perhaps this is because writers—with the exception of dramatists—are not usually permitted to witness people actually partaking of their work, unlike actors, performing and composing musicians, and painters and sculptors, all of whom can watch people in the very midst of their enjoyment of their art. Writers have to take people's word for it. Even Proust, who seems to have known

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his own worth very well, liked his portion of praise. In her lovely memoir of Proust, Céleste Albaret, who served as his general factotum during Proust's last years, remarks that her employer was a keen connoisseur of praise. When she reported to him that the mother of the banker Gans said to her that Proust's book was "so rich, so dense," Proust replied: " 'Dense'—is that what she said? I like that, Céleste." Yet Proust also knew how to spot and deal with false praise. "I thank them, Céleste, and they think I'm taken in. If they knew! They have not read a word of what I have written. I see through them immediately!" Imagine trying to pull the wool over the toes—the phrase is e. e. cummings's—of someone as perceptive as Marcel Proust.

The word for exaggerated or false praise is of course flattery. Flattery is the pit in the plum of praise, and most of us are ready enough to swallow it. I not long ago met up with an old school chum, now a quite successful salesman, and flattery being among the weapons in the salesman's arsenal, he lobbed a few grenades my way by reminding me what a good athlete I was (I wasn't), how smart I was (I wasn't), how youthful looking I have remained (I haven't). No sale. Worse, though, was an experience I had when giving a talk to a fairly large group—a thing I do neither easily nor well. Afterward, a woman in the audience took me aside to say, "You were brilliant!!!" So emphatically did she go on that before the last exclamation point had faded from the air I wondered where, exactly, I had botched it.

Occasions do present themselves in which praise of some sort seems in order. Especially does praise seem in order on meeting people whose work is of a public kind. It is here that, if not exactly false praise, misaimed praise can come into play. I recall hearing about a young writer, in his debut in London literary society, who was introduced to the late Sir Herbert Read. "Ah, Sir Herbert," said the young man, "I have derived so very much pleasure from your books." And then, struggling to remember something that Herbert Read had written, he added: "I particularly enjoyed *The Nude*." "Actually," Sir Herbert is said to have responded, "I didn't *quite* write that one." I myself for more than a few years now have avoided meeting a writer who teaches at the same university I do, because I feel that on meeting him I probably ought to say something about his writing, which in fact I find loathsome. If I were a more combative fellow, I should shake his hand, look him in the eye, and say: "I have of course been reading your work for years. Terrible stuff. What do you suppose it would take to cause you to stop writing? I mean, can you name a figure? I should be only too glad to begin fund raising." In this regard I much admire a friend of mine, an art critic of high standards, who was once asked if he were ever embarrassed to meet artists whose works he had strongly criticized. "Not at all," he said. "They ought to be embarrassed for producing such wretched art."

Awards and prizes are a species of formal recognition, and hence of praise, and while winning them is, on the whole, to be preferred to not winning them, I wonder if they don't, in their own way, encourage doubt in their recipients. To begin with, given the public-relations atmosphere in which we now live, there are so many prizes and awards: Nobels, Pulitzers, Guggenheims, Rockefellers, MacArthurs, Tonys, Oscars, Emmys, Polks, Peabodys, and so on, into the dark night of the ego. Then there are the honorary degrees, honorific lectures, blue-ribbon commissions, critics awards, and other prizes so obscure that only their recipients and donors seem to know about them. The University of Chicago, for example, has an award inaptly named Communicator of the Year. I say inaptly because whenever I see mention of it I tend to think of programs to stamp out venereal disease, and the aforementioned Communicator sounds less like an honorand than someone who must be captured and cured—and quickly.

Two embarrassing questions that anyone who has just won an award might—even though he is unlikely to—ask himself are: Who before me has won this award? And who, of obvious great merit, has not won it? Perhaps a third question might be asked: Who has shunned it? In the modern era, for example, Proust, Gide, Sartre, and Camus have disregarded the French Academy. In literature it has to be a source of minor but persistent dubiety to anyone who has won the Nobel Prize that over the years various lunkheads in Stockholm have overlooked giving a Nobel Prize to Leo Tolstoy, Henry James,

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James Joyce, and Marcel Proust. As the valuable Mlle L'Enclos might put it, "Monsieur le Nobel laureate, if you don't stop preening, I shall tell you who your fellow laureates *aren't*."

The fly backstroking in the soup of praise represented by prizes and awards is that it doesn't take long for any prize or award to besmirch itself. Give it to two or three of the wrong people, or fail to give it to one or two of the right people, and the job is done. One has to press to think of many prizes in the world today that have not been so besmirched. For intensity of besmirchment—you might imagine pigeon droppings on a dignified statue—no single award has so covered itself with the reverse of glory as the Pulitzer Prizes. Two examples will have to suffice. The Pulitzer Prize was awarded to Saul Bellow for fiction only after Bellow had won the Nobel Prize, which must have seemed like being given a cup of warmed-over instant coffee twenty minutes after having drunk the world's most expensive cognac; and it was never awarded to Hilton Kramer, whose criticism, with the possible exception only of Virgil Thomson, for seriousness and general high quality has known no peer in the history of American newspaper journalism.

That prizes and awards have less and less significance does not for a moment mean that people yearn less and less for them. It may even be that when inferior people win awards, the merely mediocre become envious. Sometimes it is surprising to learn who considers himself a contender. I, at any rate, was surprised to learn—as I did from Burton Bernstein's biography—that James Thurber was sorely disappointed not to win the Nobel Prize. Do you suppose John Barth or Joyce Carol Oates or John Irving marks his or her calendar for the day on which Nobel Prizes in Literature are given and sleeps uneasily the night before? One can readily imagine an Edward Koren cartoon set in the house of a writer in which a mother says to her small child: "Do try to be quiet today, darling. Daddy didn't win the Nobel Prize again this year."

It might be a good idea if, during certain years, prizes were not awarded for want of prize-winning achievement. Yet once the prize-awarding machinery is set in motion, the process, like the huge furnaces at steel mills, cannot be snuffed out. Consider, for instance, honorary degrees, without which many universities feel no commencement excerise is complete. I realize that there are many secret motives and hidden agendas in the awarding of honorary degrees, and these may include inducing a rich man or woman to set down large lumps of legal tender in university coffers or getting a speech on the cheap from a famous person. Some highly comic meetings must take place in which university officials try to find someone to whom to give an honorary degree. Originality in this field cannot be easy. My guess is that a man such as Father Hesburgh can by now wallpaper his bathroom with his honorary degrees. Often a true scholar or scientist or artist is awarded a just honorary degree, but honorary degrees seem increasingly to belong less to the realm of cultural achievement than to that of publicity. How else to explain the awarding of honorary degrees in recent years to the housewife-comedienne Erma Bombeck (DePauw University), the pro basketball star Julius Erving (Temple University), and the actress Meryl Streep (Vassar College) than by the hunger of these institutions for publicity? Henceforth all commencement programs ought to carry, along with the union bug, a single line from the Reverend Sydney Smith: "Among the smaller duties of life, I hardly know any one more important than that of not praising where praise is not due."

Some events do seem to cry out for praise, and the most common and saddest of these is death. Death fogs the mind, usually misting over the faults of the deceased, but a too-strong eulogy or an overwritten obituary can leave a coppery taste in the mouth. I once attended a party at which a famous scholar was presented with a Festschrift volume in his honor, and after listening to the laudatory speeches of some of his former students, the honoree remarked: "A Festschrift is much to be preferred to an obituary. Both, of course, figure to be filled with lies about one's merits, but the nice thing about a Festschrift is that, unlike an obituary, one still has a bit of time left to turn a few of these lies into truths."

The dead are owed kindness; whether they are also owed praise is another question. Who has not been to a funeral service in which a clergyman is called upon to eulogize a man or woman he has never known, the effect of

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which can be relied upon to come off as successfully as Bach played on a twopenny kazoo. A few years ago I attended, in an Episcopal church, a memorial service for an acquaintance who had badly flubbed his life. Alcoholism had brought him too many sad indignities and a fatal heart attack at fifty. I thought the priest who conducted the service was wise in scarcely speaking of the man, whom he didn't know—the service was held at the request of the man's mother, who was a member of the church—and instead emphasizing the mercifulness of death in the Christian religion.

At another memorial service, a secular service, this one for a man I knew rather better, three speakers arose to quote various great authors on the dead man's behalf, and all three praised him for his fine sense of humor. Now if this man had an abiding flaw, it was precisely his sense of humor, which tended to be fidgety, a screen for a painful sense of insecurity, and so overlaid with levels of irony that fully half the time one needed to be an archaeologist to get at the joke he was intending, which, when one did get at it, turned out to be not very good. The service—and our memory of the dead man—was only saved when a fourth speaker, one of the man's sons, arose to talk about what a good father he was.

A highly effective device so seldom called upon in speaking of the dead is truth. When the notebooks of the Englishman Geoffrey Madan were published not long ago, the editors, J. A. Gere and John Sparrow, after speaking of Madan's virtues, did not flinch at recalling his flaws, chief among them aloofness and great dispassion. They then cited the opening sentence of an obituary article meant for *The Times* of London but apparently never sent: "A genius for friendship with all and sundry, infectious enthusiasm, selfless devotion to progressive causes, a deep and touching love of animals and of natural beauty—he [Madan] would not have claimed for himself any of these so frequent attributes of the lately dead."

Skill at the obituarist's art is rare anywhere, but seems at especially low ebb in the United States. I cannot remember having read a single obituary in the *New York Times* that I consider close to being worth dying for. The great obituarist of our age surely is Isaiah Berlin. He always seems to hit exactly the right tone, not scanting weaknesses and flaws, yet making these issue in a finer appreciation. As an example of what I mean, here is a paragraph from the middle of Isaiah Berlin's obituary article on Maurice Bowra:

> Bowra saw life as a series of hurdles, a succession of fences to take: there were books, articles, reviews to write; pupils to teach, lectures to deliver; committees, even social occasions, were so many challenges to be met, no less so than the real ordeals—attacks by hostile critics, or vicissitudes of personal relationships, or the hazards of health. In the company of a few familiar friends, on whose loyalty he could rely, he relaxed and often was easy, gentle and at peace. But the outer world was full of obstacles to be taken at a run; at times he stumbled, and was wounded: he took such reverses with a stiff upper lip; and then, at once, energetically moved forward to the next task. Hence, it may be, his need and craving for recognition, and the corresponding pleasure he took in the many honours he received. The flat, pedestrian, lucid, well-ordered, but, at times, conventional style and content of his published writings may also be due to this peculiar lack of faith in his own true and splendid gifts. His private letters, his private verse, and above all his conversation, were a very different matter. Those who know him solely through his published works can have no inkling of his genius.

That long and intellectually nutritious paragraph seems to me less praising than appreciative, yet at the same time it makes one recognize that solid appreciation, appreciation that does not scamp complexity, conduces to the highest, the most worthwhile, praise.

I have been reading a book entitled *To Absent Friends* by Red Smith, by all reckoning the best sportswriter in this country over the past half century, which strikes this appreciative note with quiet good grace. The book is composed of a series of commemorative articles about people whose athletic and sometimes simply human performances Red Smith felt enriched his own life; and here, in prose, he repays them. His article on Stanley Woodward, his editor at the *New York Herald-Tribune*, begins: "The best and kindest man I ever knew died yesterday." Of Grantland Rice, he writes: "I do not mourn for him, who welcomed peace. I mourn for us." What is finally very impressive about these articles is that someone—Red Smith, specifically—took the trouble to notice and record men acting

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better than we are accustomed to having men act. Thus, of Joe Louis, Smith writes: "Not once in sixty-six years was he known to utter a word of complaint or bitterness or offer an excuse for anything." One did not have to be a great figure to have Red Smith notice one's quality, and of a press agent named Harry Mendel he wrote: "He was the best [at what he did] partly because he worked at it and was unfailingly reliable and tirelessly considerate, and partly because he knew the game [of boxing] so well, but especially because he was such a dead-honest guy." How lovely to have a wreath like that draped over one's grave!

In appreciation, there is no substitute for genuine feeling, and even the blurbs on the dust jacket of *To Absent Friends* convey genuine feeling. Allow me to cite but one: "Red Smith was not only an outstanding sports-writer, he was a true gentleman. Over the years, he accumulated a multitude of friends. It was a privilege and a pleasure to be included among them."—Joe DiMaggio. The best of the other blurbs on *To Absent Friends* come from athletes and coaches, and they are a reminder of the degeneration of praise as it comes through most blurb writing in our day. Blurbissimo, I call it, hoping that this neologism will properly convey its Mussolini-like hollowness and pomposity.

Searching among my own books, the most handsome set of blurbs I have discovered decorates the back cover of *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore*, whose blurbs come from W. H. Auden, Louise Bogan, T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, and, tailing off some, Sir Herbert Read and John Ashbery. But generally blurbs are poor stuff. Peter Prescott, for example, is quoted in an advertisement for Norman Mailer's recent novel, *Ancient Evenings*: "Mailer remains the most talented writer we have just now." I especially like that "just now"; it makes me want to respond, If Mailer is the best we have just now, please wake me later. For a novel by Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, the various blurbifiers write: "Not written but breathed. . . ." "A riveting, intricate, and altogether astonishing novel. . . ." "A long, detailed, intelligent and moving novel . . . the result is a richly textured, engrossing narrative that at midpoint becomes impossible to put down." What is there about that last blurb that makes me think I would have no hope of getting to midpoint? There is something about this kind of writing that makes one feel its authors aren't really praising but imitating praise.

Perhaps there is simply too much praise in the world; perhaps praise itself has become too institutionalized, too much expected, altogether too much business as usual. Perhaps it has become time to follow the lead of the elderly friend whom Somerset Maugham describes visiting in his book *The Summing Up*. A religious man, he read prayers to the assembled household each morning, but crossed out all the passages in the *Book of Common Prayer* that praised God. "He said that there was nothing so vulgar as to praise people to their faces, and, himself a gentleman, he could not believe that God was so ungentlemanly as to like it. At the time it seemed to me a curious eccentricity. I think now that my friend showed very good sense." I do, too. However much the rest of us may need praise, surely God doesn't.

I have been judged in print on a number of occasions and, on some of these occasions, have been found praiseworthy. On too many of them, though, the praise—either because it was fulsome or ignorant or came from the wrong quarter—has seemed to me embarrassing. At such times I have been sharply reminded of Sainte-Beuve's remark to the effect that if you tell me who admires you, I can tell you who you really are. I would add to this that, today when praise is so abundant, who you really are can perhaps be better told by the people who hate you. For this reason I have always felt gratified to have been compared, in print, by Gore Vidal to Hitler and by Alfred Kazin to Zinoviev. I hope that, in any obituary that is to be written about me, it will be noted that these things were said about me. After all, an intelligent reader will know that any man who has been compared to Hitler by Gore Vidal and to Zinoviev by Alfred Kazin can't, really, have been all bad.

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The Truth

(for Steve Orlen)

David Wojahn

After Jarrell

This afternoon I brought him a toy dog.
He asked me its name, and soon
we were weeping in each other's arms,
and I loved him again, though he wasn't himself.
That's what the nurse said, too. *He's so very small,*
I thought, *to look so old.*
The ward was drab. The children
wore lime green hospital gowns.
But he wasn't sick, only hurt past recognition.

Now I watch the winter fields
pass like memory from beyond the train,
nothing green. In the window I can see myself
through a girl on a plain of snow
schooling a pony in an oblong pen,
or a boy on a hill watching cars
unraveling light on the road to Derry.
Evening now, jigsaws of smoke from the chimneys
With her riding crop, the girl
conducts crescendoes of snow. She's the age
my daughter would have been. She looks up—
stars. The sirens of the rail crossing
like red gloves piercing her ears all night.

Across me the old woman snores,
Christmas chocolates and a hatbox on her lap.
The conductor wakes her
to tell her London nears. Tonight,

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no blackout, no searchlights in the sky.
My husband is not in Scotland, my daughter
is not asleep, and I am not
the mother of the son I love. Arriving beneath
the smoked-glass dome of the station
is like entering some undiscovered planet in a film.
The atmosphere is steam, and nothing
around you stays the same.

Blitz, they called it. I didn't know
where Gerald was, and when the roof
exploded like a paper sack, I kept shaking Sarah
until the life seemed gone from both of us.
The boy kept watching from the corner.

It happens so fast. You look up
and your life is changed past recognition.
Though today I put my arms around him
and we cried, for a moment he was not my son.
I wanted to shout to the nurse
and everyone there was some mistake.
Yet he was all I had,
not himself, and we cried.

✪ DAVID WOJAHN, whose work has appeared in *Poetry*, the *American Poetry Review*, and *Ploughshares*, is the author of *Icehouse Lights*, a collection of poems.

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The Economics of Superstars

SHERWIN ROSEN

WHO IN RECENT YEARS has not felt his gorge rise upon learning the staggeringly high salary of a shortstop, a movie star, an opera singer? A basketball player on a losing team earns $1.2 million; an author sells the paperback rights to his book for $800,000; a television interviewer switches networks and signs a contract calling for her to receive an annual income of just under $2 million. And the gorge continues to rise. The spectacle of people doing work that doesn't always seem overweighted with significance for annual (and, in the case of rock singers, sometimes nightly) sums of money that figure to exceed what you and I may earn in our lifetimes—this, as they say nowadays, does not give off good vibes. What's going on here?

What we are talking about, of course, is the phenomenon of superstars, wherein relatively small numbers of people earn enormous amounts of money and seem to dominate the fields in which they are engaged. This phenomenon appears to be increasingly important in the modern world—certainly, with the breakdown of economic privacy, it is an increasingly visible phenomenon. The very word *superstar* implies inflation in our most precious currency, language; to be a star would have been sufficient in my youth. Yet we appear to be stuck with the term. As for the phenomenon itself, viewed from the standpoint of an economist, it may not be as puzzling as it at first glimpse seems.

The first thing to be said in this connection is that certain economic activities admit extreme concentration of both personal reward and market size among a handful of participants. Every economic activity supports considerable diversity of talent and significant inequality in the personal distribution of rewards. Activities where superstars are found differ from those in which most of us make our livings by supporting much less diversity and much more inequality in the distribution of earnings. The bulk of earnings goes to relatively small numbers of practitioners—typically, the few regarded as among the best in their fields. Similar distributions of earnings in the industrial sector would ultimately come to the attention of the Federal Trade Commission or the

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Justice Department, but so far as I know, proceedings in restraint of trade were never brought against Caruso, Babe Ruth, Picasso, or the Beatles.

It is difficult for students of income inequality to obtain systematic data on these matters, because most royalty arrangements and salary negotiations are still private and confidentiality laws prohibit public disclosure. Still, the phenomenon is obvious to everyone and is nowhere more apparent these days than in professional sports. We are bombarded by stories of fabulous amounts of money earned in salaries, sign-up bonuses, pensions, and incentive clauses in the contracts of professional athletes. A typical player in the National Basketball Association is reported to earn somewhere in the vicinity of $250,000 per year in salary equivalent alone, and this figure will soon rise to $300,000. We hear of genuine superstars, towering figures as it were, with contracts guaranteeing numbers in the seven digits per year, and of a significant fraction of not-so-esteemed players who earn in the high sixes. In baseball, winter now brings a different form of hot-stove league than in the old days. The revolution in the free-agency contract (which, by the way, has many features in common with the breakdown of the old star/stock-company contract system in Hollywood of the 1930s and 1940s) raises speculations about where a player might even be located next year, never mind the unbelievable size of contracts negotiated by many players who have become free agents. How could it be that many a mediocre free agent earns far more than the secretary of state and the president of the United States combined?

Detailed official earnings figures are more readily available among professional golfers and tennis players, since the nature of competition in these sports puts prize money on a different status than in most other sports. As every reader of the sports page knows, earnings in the top ranks among golfers and tennis pros have grown from a pittance twenty years ago to enormous sums today. And the numbers quoted in the press represent only the tip of the iceberg because they ignore unofficial winnings, endorsements, and other payments that are often two, three, or more times as large as official earnings. True, some of these figures simply are the result of price inflation: a $60,000 salary in 1960 had the equivalent purchasing power of $200,000 in 1982. But can anyone doubt that earnings growth in these activities has not far surpassed the rate of inflation?

There is another more important and more interesting sense in which the publicized contracts of athletes are the tip of the iceberg. They refer only to the successes. In sports, we seldom if ever hear about what happens to the unsuccessful. A boxer of championship caliber, if sufficiently careful about his contract and the finaglings of his entourage,

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might retire after a relatively brief career with wealth on the order of $20 million or $30 million. Sugar Ray Leonard, from all reports, has done so. Sums of that magnitude are, however, skewed to a minute fraction of boxers. The median boxer cannot even make a living at the game and has difficulty generating more than a few thousand per year. Only the hopefuls, including both those with genuine prospects and those who have not yet perceived how dim their prospects really are, can sustain interest and commitment in boxing at those earnings. Ranking contenders earn enough to work full time at the trade but hardly make fortunes, especially when physical risks and the brief period of their productivity are considered.

Every job has its risks and rewards, and one can never tell in advance precisely how things will turn out in the end. Fortunately for the majority of us, most occupations admit far less concentration of rewards and allow a person to find an acceptable niche relative to personal abilities and motivation than do superstar activities. There only a select few take home most of the marbles. The National Basketball Association has about 250 players; there is probably a lesser number of tournament-quality golfers and tennis players; and there are at most a few dozen highly successful boxers. The number of people attempting to break into the top echelons is larger by many orders of magnitude.

These examples point to another characteristic of the activities where superstars are found. Rewards and the probability of success appear to rise more than proportionately with talent and ability. In this we are on a little dangerous ground because in many instances it is difficult to find objective measures of personal productivity. If in football a running back is half a step quicker than the defense, that might have enormous effect on his productivity. Then there are various intangibles to consider. Intangibles may even define the star and superstar. Nevertheless, consider the following: The top five money winners on the pro golf tour have annual stroke averages that are less than 5 percent lower than the fiftieth or sixtieth ranking players, yet they earn four or five times as much money. A twenty-game winning pitcher in baseball earns far more than the sum of two ten-game winners. In other words, the reward structure in most sports is highly nonlinear—that is, it rises in great disproportion to personal ability. This is just the other side of the observation that, in the fields where superstars exist, most income accrues to a very small number of persons.

An analogy will perhaps nail the point. A salesman's productivity is easily measured by the value of goods he sells relative to their cost. Payment on commission basis guarantees a roughly proportional relationship between personal productivity and pay (roughly, because most commission systems are not strictly linear). If the nature of competition

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was such that the person who sold the most in the firm received, say, 80 percent of the firm's total compensation to salespersons, the distribution of reward would be much more concentrated and skewed to the top ranks than it actually is. But, then, this is precisely what defines a superstar.

In a competitive market economy, of which the United States is a tolerable approximation for the purposes of this discussion, competition ensures that workers are paid in proportion to their personal contribution to national output. Were someone paid less than that contribution, a competing firm would bid more for his services. A person perceived as twice as productive receives twice as much. By the standards of the day, this kind of social arrangement is generally thought to be reasonably equitable. In addition, a central theorem in economics proves that payment by appropriate contribution is the efficient outcome of a decentralized competitive market mechanism under ordinary circumstances. It is efficient in the sense of making the best out of resources available. To be sure, most of us perceive our own talent with a bit more acuity than the way others see it, but misperceptions on that score are, with a few exceptions, ones we can live with. Superstar phenomena appear on the surface to be rather different. There a person with a slight edge in talent receives significantly larger rewards. The puzzle is confounded by the fact that the activities in which superstars engage are characterized by an extreme form of competition. Does this suggest that the principle of payment by contribution has been abandoned?

Before attempting to answer that question, it may be useful to delimit further the scope of our discussion and place it in a broader context. Social policy of the last two decades has focused the attention both of the public and of professional economists on inequality in the distribution of income and particularly on the plight of the poor and the problem of poverty. However, a much longer tradition in social science has concerned itself with the nature and sources of inequality in economic life generally. Of particular interest here is an observation, first studied systematically by the great Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto in the late nineteenth century, that the distribution of income contains an unusually large proportion of top earners: that is, among the rich rather than the poor. A visual image will perhaps clarify what is meant by "unusual" in this connection. Imagine a graph plotting IQ scores on the horizontal and the frequency of scores on the vertical. The result is a familiar bell-shaped curve. The peak of the bell occurs at a score arbitrarily scaled at 100 and the curve falls symmetrically on either side of 100. Now picture a similar graph, except with earnings on the horizontal. The resulting curve is unbalanced and nonsymmetrical—a bell that is definitely out of whack. To the left of the modal (peak) value it appears much like the IQ

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frequency curve. However, to the right of the mode it does not fall as fast as it does to the left. It looks as if someone had stood at the right end of the curve, placed it over his back like a rope, and dragged and stretched it out a very long distance. The upper or right-hand tail of the distribution of income is much thicker than the lower, left-hand tail. The extra weight on the right lends a certain skewness to the distribution of income. What this comes down to is that the distribution of earnings is far from proportionate to the distribution of ability. Amazingly, Pareto's observations have been qualitatively duplicated in virtually every era of every society for which data on income distributions can be found.

For the phenomenon of superstar income to exist, certain conditions must exist alongside it. The attention of the media to the activities in which the superstars engage is one such condition. This becomes evident in the world of show business, of which professional sports might be considered a subset; but it is also evident in arts and letters, two other fields that produce superstars. Show business first. Plausibly informed opinion has it that the number of full-time comedians in the United States does not exceed a few hundred. This is probably a smaller number than was employed in the days of vaudeville. Among contemporary comedians, the most popular are reported to earn extraordinary sums—and none earn more than those who appear regularly on television. Again, the capacity of television to produce large incomes is manifest in the enormous salaries paid to news broadcasters, especially those who work for the networks and for stations located in large local markets such as New York and Chicago.

Popular music, which is also dependent upon promotion in the media, abounds with superstars. Classical music plays to a smaller market, but it has its fair share of superstars. The market for classical music has never been larger than it is now, yet full-time soloists on any given instrument are said to number in the few hundreds (and to be much fewer for instruments other than violin, piano, and voice). Performers of the first rank comprise small handfuls out of these already quite small numbers. Interestingly, income differences between first-rank and second-rank performers are substantial, even though, in a blind hearing, an infinitesimal portion of the audience could detect more than minor differences among them.

Writers seeking superstar status increasingly appear on television or lend themselves to newspaper and magazine interviews. A popular author whose work is seldom if ever discussed in this journal has sold more than twenty million copies of his novels in the past twenty years. But superstars of a sort—minor superstars?—even appear in the less well known field of textbook writing. For example, undergraduate course enrollments in economics have taken an unexpected leap forward in

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recent years. Enrollments have become so large that a leading elementary text can sell upwards of a hundred thousand copies in its first year or two. At a royalty rate of three or four dollars per volume, this is not a bad piece of change. Little wonder that a plethora of new titles appears year after year with hardly more than the most superficial distinctions among them.

Wherever superstars are to be found, I believe at least one of two elements will also be found—elements that are necessary to support and sustain both stars and superstars. One element is that the technology of consumption or use of the services provided by the activity must be such that poor talent is an inadequate substitute for superior talent. More about this presently. The other element has to do with certain peculiarities in the technology of the production of services through the use of audiences. These activities must admit duplication of a kind so that a person—the superstar—can deliver services to many buyers simultaneously. Once again, here the use of media is instrumental.

That greater and lesser talents are imperfect substitutes for each other is a notion that applies to a wide variety of work, but it applies in particular to the service sector of the economy. Substitution between persons of varying talent is often easier when the products of their labor are homogeneous. Farmers pay harvest workers by the pound or bushel and are willing to take on all comers at a set price because it is the total amount harvested, not its distribution over workers, that is most relevant to the profitability of their enterprise. Two persons who harvest half as much are about as good as one whose productivity is twice as large. Among the practically infinite varieties of work required by modern economies, there are fine gradations in the relative importance of the composition or distribution of productivity among many persons as compared with its sum. At one pole it is the sum that matters most; at the other pole the distribution is paramount, and substitution may be very difficult indeed.

Sometimes these differences are inherent in the valuations put upon services by buyers. If one surgeon is 10 percent more successful in saving lives than another, who among us would not be willing to pay much more than a 10 percent premium to have the more skillful person perform the operation? A company engaged in a $30 million treble-damages law suit is rash to scrimp on the legal talent it engages. Stockholders and directors would look askance at hiring mediocre talents under those circumstances. Other times differences are inherent in the nature of services demanded. Hearing a succession of second-rate singers does not measure up to hearing one outstanding performance by Placido Domingo. Contracting for a legal defense with two lawyers, each of whom would be likely to lose the case half the time, would not elevate

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the probability of winning much above one-half and may actually decrease it.

Here it must be added that the positive effect of talent for insuring successful outcomes is not necessarily independent of the nature of services to be rendered. Some tasks are so routine and so circumscribed by existing practice that nearly any competent person achieves about the same outcome. Others are more difficult, more uncertain, and, this being so, allow greater possibilities for alternative courses of action and decision. Such tasks offer greater scope for superior talent to stand out and make its mark. More capable physicians spend smaller fractions of their time on routine cases and larger fractions on difficult ones than do physicians of more modest ability, and it is socially desirable that they *should do so. Untested apprentice jockeys never ride the favorites in* big-stakes races.

Such considerations are important for understanding the market for executive officers in large firms. Unusually good information on executive compensation is available from public proxy statements circulated to stockholders by requirement of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Examination of these statements is instructive. They reveal superstar-scale rewards that are highly concentrated among the top half-dozen executives in these firms. More detailed study indicates that the top incomes vary systematically with the size of the organization. Large firms pay executives more than smaller firms do. Even the occasional, well-publicized dollar-a-year man falls in line once stock options, pensions, and other forms of deferred compensation are properly accounted. The value to the organization of good top-level decisions and avoidance of bad decisions is abundantly clear once the nature of control of resources on such a vast scale is considered.

Common use of the term *officer* for corporate executives suggests certain parallels with the military. A good or bad decision by a platoon leader does not have much effect on the overall fortunes of war, but the same cannot be said of decisions made by the chief strategists. The value of extra talent is much larger at the top of the organizational hierarchy than at the bottom because those decisions percolate through the enterprise, and they have much further to travel in a larger enterprise than in a smaller one. Competition in the market for executive talent of this high order is what sustains salary and other payments of the superstar size reported in the proxy statements.

That a little talent often goes a long way takes us a fair distance in understanding Pareto's observation on the concentration of density in the right-hand tail of the distribution of income. However, it has substantial difficulty in coming to terms with the other aspect of superstars—the marked concentration of reward and output among

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relatively small numbers of people in certain lines of work. Here the elusive quality of box-office appeal, or the ability to attract an audience and generate a large volume of transactions, must be confronted. Current and prospective impresarios will find no guidance from economists on what makes for box-office appeal. One might as well consult psychiatrists on how to raise children. But that doesn't mean people can't recognize it when they see it, or that where and when superstars will appear, and to what extent, might not be predictable, even though it is impossible to tell in advance who the lucky ones will be. The general importance of box-office appeal in the creation of superstars should not be underestimated. The jockeys who obtain mounts in the big races need the credential of a winning record. Aspiring executives cater to a small clientele but still need to attract sufficient attention by past performances to be in the running for the top positions.

The superstar is someone whose audience is enormous relative to the scale on which most of us operate. Personal markets of that magnitude are almost exclusively sustained by use of media as a cooperating resource. These markets represent technologies that, in effect, allow a person to clone himself at little cost. More precisely, costs do not increase nearly in proportion to market size; and if costs are the same, the more tickets that can be sold is, as they say, all gravy. Once an author delivers a manuscript to a publisher, it can be duplicated at small expense practically indefinitely. A television or radio program is communicated virtually costlessly and identically to whomever happens to tune in. The performer or author puts out more or less the same effort whether one thousand or one million people show up to listen to the concert or buy the book.

Most economic activities are far more constrained in this respect. In the generality of such activities, costs increase more nearly in proportion, or more than in proportion, with output. When this is the case, it is not necessarily advantageous to work on the grand scale. The ultimate constraint here is the limitation of time. Services rendered by most professionals and other workers require significant one-to-one contact with buyers, and each of these contacts takes time. Time can be conserved, but only at significant cost. For example, a fancy and nimble dentist might manage to keep himself fully occupied by shifting waiting time to patients, by keeping the waiting room full of patients, and by working three chairs sequentially with several assistants. Many patients remain willing to pay the time and money costs if the services provided are sufficiently good, but imagine what would happen to the concentration of supply of dental services if a practitioner could serve a thousand patients simultaneously.

Here it becomes clear that technologies that enable sellers to cater to

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mass audiences account for the small number of successful practitioners in the fields we commonly associate with superstars. It just doesn't take many people to supply the entire market demand for these services when each one can effectively duplicate himself through the media. This, combined with a little market competition, also accounts for why the successful few are among the talent elite and why their incomes are so large. In such economic activities, a person of lesser talent is dominated by a person of greater talent who charges the same price. The greater talent captures all the business, and it is worthwhile to get as much business as possible because costs don't increase by very much. But the more talented person can do even better. His extra margin of talent allows him to raise prices above what the less talented can charge without losing significant audience and market share. Once again a little extra ability goes a long way. The return on each unit sold may be very small, but total reward is enormous because unit reward is multiplied by a large number. The fundamental limitation on the superstar's reward is the potential size of the market out there to be attracted and the relative edge of the superstar's talent over those of others waiting in the wings—those who are willing to supply services to the market should the occasion arise and who keep trying to do so.

Several factors determine whether the relevant market is shared by a larger or smaller number of performers. First, the many facets of talent and box-office appeal, indeed the intangibles that make it so difficult to predict who will emerge as superstars, give rise to substantial disagreement, differences of opinion, and perception about who best caters to the individual buyer's preferences and tastes. There seems to be less room for these kinds of differences in professional sports than in many other areas. All that is required in sports is enough people to provide the competition and uncertainty about outcomes that maintain fan interest. The book trade appears to offer greater scope for variety and therefore to support large numbers of authors. Readers' preferences span a broad spectrum of education and interests, and each demands a certain amount of variety in and of itself. An author's skills are much more specialized than that.

Second, in those areas where creativity and product differentiation are crucial to the trade, limitations on the creative process often impose sharp constraints on individual supply. It is the rare book whose life on the best-seller list is as long as it took the writer to craft it. There is also a danger for the artist or entertainer of overexposure and competition with his own past performances. On the other hand, it often happens that an innovator attracts many successful imitators simply because the crank can't be turned fast enough by any single person. Finally, in some areas practitioners must contend with legacies: competition is especially

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tough because the current generation competes with the giants of the past. Cursory examination of subscription programs of major orchestras reveals that in this competition contemporary composers seldom win, and it is well known that nowadays remarkably few new musical compositions receive even *one* official performance. Depreciation of the past occurs at a much greater pace in other fields.

Personal market expansion, which ultimately requires using inferior production techniques that dilute and degrade the quality of performance transmitted to the audience, is another powerful force that often works toward spreading the business around. A clarinet concerto in Yankee Stadium might as well not be performed. Recordings are a superior way of reaching large audiences but are inferior in most dimensions to live performances before smaller groups. Another way of putting this is to say that costs do in fact increase with overall audience size. However, if buyers are willing to put up with greater dilution for the pleasure of watching or listening to the more talented performers, marketing costs of superstars do not rise as much as for other purveyors of goods, and superstars do retain a competitive edge in using large audience production methods. Slim pickings are left for the less talented. The point is related to the high-quality physician who chooses to spend less time with each patient, charging lower prices than otherwise, and spreading his skills over a much larger number of patients. Dilution of a large talent maintains competitive advantage over smaller talent if the price is right.

One hears complaints from time to time about the necessity for debasing the inherent quality of one's product to appeal to mass audiences and coarser tastes. And so it may be. Yet there are too many counter examples not to warrant certain skepticism about this argument. A good soldier of social science, I prefer to think about it in less value-laden terms. The potential size of audiences to be tapped varies across different fields. Why this is so is territory where angels and most market researchers fear to tread. Many of these differences cannot be easily explained. Why, for instance, is soccer more popular abroad than in the United States? Economics does, however, provide a plausible speculation of modest generality. We are not born with refined tastes, by definition. Rather, they must be developed by education, effort, and investment. A serious writer imposes great demands on an audience, and only those who have undertaken prior investments in literary culture gain commensurate rewards. It is, furthermore, not altogether obvious that serious artists have either the capacity or the desire to produce the good trash that captures larger markets and satisfies less refined tastes.

Whatever the sources of these differences, economies of the scale afforded by modern media imply that it is monetarily more advantageous

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to operate in a larger overall market, and it is increasingly advantageous the more talented one is. Here lies the attraction of New York and not Cincinnati for actors, writers, artists. Similarly, the best doctors, lawyers, and architects are more frequently found in the larger cities. Whether we like it or not, today it is more lucrative to be a violinist than an accordionist, a heavyweight than a flyweight, a rock musician than a folk singer, a tennis player than a gymnast, and a writer of elementary texts than of monographs.

Changes in the technology of communication and control of distribution have decreased the cost of cloning of talent in many areas and contributed substantially to turning mere stars into superstars. Motion pictures, radio, television, phono-reproduction equipment, and other changes in communications not only have generally decreased the real price of entertainment services but also have increased the possible size of each performer's audience. The effect of radio and recordings on pop singers' incomes and the influence of television on the incomes of news reporters and professional athletes are good cases in point. There are finer gradations within these categories. Television is a more effective medium for American football than for bowling, and incomes reflect it. Television nevertheless has had an enormous influence on the fortunes of top bowlers, golfers, and tennis players because it has enabled their markets to become much larger. Nor are these changes confined to the entertainment sector. Reductions in the costs of communication and transportation have expanded potential markets for all kinds of professional services and have allowed many of the top practitioners in the arts, journalism, and elsewhere to work on national and international scales.

Is all this fair? Probably not. Few people grow to be seven feet tall, never mind with the agility of a cat. Fair or not, it is the necessary and natural outcome of the unusual technology with which we now live. The distribution of rewards would look much different if modern technology did not admit such large economies of scale, but it is by no means obvious that society as a whole would be better off without it. The sums earned by first- and second-rank stars today are sources of envy and disgust in some quarters and give rise to mumblings about crass commercialism and the evils of cutthroat competition. In my view, a more balanced perspective is possible once one understands how technologies that sustain such sums have at the same time reduced the relevant real price and cost of these services to consumers to remarkably small proportions compared with earlier days. Bringing back the good old days of restrictive reserve clauses and stock-company movie star contract systems surely would reduce the incomes of those stars. It just as surely would simply transfer the gains to club owners and producers

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because it would do nothing to eliminate the fundamental sources that support them. Because of the technology and the demand, the money is there; the only question is how is it to be divided up.

The great singer Elizabeth Billington earned somewhere between £10,000 and £15,000 in the 1801 season of the London Opera. (Neither *Grove's* nor the Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition, gives information on endorsements.) I imagine after adjusting for 1981 prices, Mrs. Billington would remain a pale shadow beside Pavarotti. What would her income have been had phonograph records existed in 1801? What changes in the future will be wrought by cable, video cassettes, home computers, and hard copy? Stick around. As the vaudeville comedians used to say, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Querencia

WILLIAM STAFFORD

Years and miles ago in a high country
one morning the sun shone into a cave—splendid
paintings leaped into color. A mysterious artist
had worked by candlelight on the walls in secret.

Rocky slides now have hidden that room. No chart
or path or tunnel penetrates, no person remembers.
All of history has turned aside from that glimpse
the sun had; nobody believes in that room anymore.

It is there.

WILLIAM STAFFORD teaches literature at Lewis and Clark College. His most recent collection of poetry is *A Glass Face in the Rain.*

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Conversation Pieces

ELDER OLSON

Dark Day

Sick, battered, and defeated, home I came
And sat and stared with envy at the clock
For which days dark or bright are all the same
And every moment is mere tick or tock.

To a Lady Who Thought Some of His Poems Too Gloomy

What? Mere images more than you can bear?
Look at the world around you, if you dare.

Old Man

He sits in the warm sun, and still is cold;
He can remember little of anything;
Yet has that wisdom only age can bring,
Which is, to know what it feels like to be old.

Age

Do not mock at the old; God takes it ill,
For old as they are, he is older still.

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Intimation of Immortality

Death hates the fruit
But loves the pit
Not knowing Life's
Concealed in it.

King Alfred's Proverb

Hast thou a wound, a grievous woe?
Tell it not knave nor man of worth;
Tell it to thy saddle-bow,
Ride singing forth.

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Culture and Learning in Beirut

LAWRENCE I. CONRAD

THE CRISIS IN LEBANON has been publicized and discussed so profusely that it would hardly seem necessary to stress the impact that civil war and foreign invasion have had on this beleaguered nation. In fact, however, the overwhelming attention focused on political and military developments has tended to obscure the no less important human dimensions of the conflict. Such matters raise issues that would require a book—or several books—to discuss them adequately. Here I will only consider, and that in a very limited way restricted to a Lebanese perspective, one particular aspect of the problem: that of the influence of "the events" (to borrow the current Lebanese euphemism) on culture and learning in Beirut and how this relates to current discussions about the future of Lebanon.

It is important to bear in mind that culture and learning in the Lebanese capital are not a product of the oil boom of the 1970s. Beirut has been a city of considerable importance since the mid-nineteenth century, when significant changes and rapid growth began in what had earlier been only a small coastal town. The expansion of Mediterranean trade gave Beirut new importance as a port, and the resulting economic opportunities attracted investment and led to the rise of an influential class of local merchants, traders, and financiers. Foreigners from Europe, the United States, and the Arab world came to do business in Beirut, and many of them settled there. At the same time, ties with the countryside expanded, leading to a continuing symbiosis between Beirut and the rural village folk of Mount Lebanon. These factors made Beirut a city of great social and economic variety and engendered and nurtured the open-minded worldliness and receptivity to new ideas that have characterized it ever since.

Already regarded as the third-ranking city of the Ottoman Empire by the turn of the century, Beirut became even more important by the 1940s. Lebanon's central geographic position, its apparent stability, the

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free flow of information unhindered by government controls, strict banking secrecy laws (passed in 1958), and the vigorous entrepreneurial tradition and aggressive competitive spirit of the Lebanese themselves made Beirut the logical focus for Middle East finance and trade, both of which expanded at rapid rates after World War II. Foreign capital and business operations brought many new foreign residents to the city; its cosmopolitan character was further enhanced by the growth of tourism, which attracted large numbers of visitors, largely from Arab countries, to the Lebanese capital and the nearby mountain resorts. The Arab-Israeli crisis also played a role in Beirut's growth. The precarious political climate elsewhere was a distinct advantage in the city's appeal to foreign business and finance; even more important, refugees from Palestine from 1948 onward have included large numbers of professionally skilled, highly educated, and prosperous individuals, many of whom have come to Beirut and made important contributions to social, economic, and cultural life there. By 1974, on the eve of the civil war, Beirut was a city of more than seven hundred thousand people, including an educated and intellectually receptive upper and middle class of Lebanese and a very large community of foreign residents from all over the world (sixty-eight nations maintained embassies or diplomatic missions in Beirut prior to the war).

These developments helped to make Beirut a focus of prosperity, urban refinement, and tolerance and in general produced a quality of life unrivaled elsewhere in the Middle East. Such an environment led to the efflorescence of a vigorous and many-faceted cultural life in the city, the most important components of which have been an active involvement in the fine and performing arts and a highly developed tradition of higher education.

The effect of the violence since early 1975 has, of course, been disastrous, for Beirut has been the scene of some of the fiercest fighting of the conflict. Militiamen fought in the streets and with heavy weapons battered the buildings held by their enemies. Fires sometimes raged out of control for days. Shelling of residential areas and sniper attacks on innocent civilians became common practices during the civil war of 1975–76 and later continued in certain areas. Both the Syrian and the Israeli armies have besieged the city, and both have subjected it to indiscriminate bombardment.

Beirut has suffered enormously as a result of these clashes. Some areas have been completely devastated, and overall about a quarter of the buildings in the city have suffered some significant damage. Many international firms transferred their operations elsewhere, and to the calculable economic losses must be added the intangible factor of almost a decade of lost growth. But this pales in comparison to the human

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losses. The overall death toll from the violence in Lebanon, as of July 1983, is something in excess of sixty thousand, with particularly heavy casualties among the civilian population of Beirut. And with this one must consider the effects of the dislocation of thousands of people from their destroyed or uninhabitable homes and the flight of many Lebanese and much of the foreign community.

Beirut is no Dresden, however, and comparisons of the sort in vogue with the Western media are unfortunate and misleading. The primary destruction from the war was, until summer 1982, limited to the downtown and hotel districts in the north and an area extending for several miles south along the "Green Line" dividing East and West Beirut. The Israeli siege laid waste much of the southern suburbs and caused massive destruction within West Beirut, but still most of the city remains intact. The contrast between the combat zones and the quarters beyond them has often reached fantastic extremes: while bitter fighting raged in the ruined downtown areas in 1976, for example, university classes were in session hardly a mile away. As this contrast serves to illustrate, Beirut is still quite alive. This has much to do with the marked tenacity that characterizes the attitude of the Lebanese toward their country and their capital, a theme implicit in many of the following observations.

How, then, have culture and learning fared in Beirut? A particularly vivid example of the effects of the war on cultural life in the city is its influence on the performing arts, in which a great deal of innovative work (especially in theater) was being produced in the decade leading up to the crisis of 1975. The steady deterioration of security conditions beginning at that time naturally led to a sharp decline in the field. Aside from the obvious and primary difficulty of heavy fighting, there were other, often more pervasive and persistent, problems. Communications were at times impossible, electricity was unreliable (and for a time totally unavailable), and in general the ceaseless tension and uncertainty about what *might* happen within the next month, week, day, or even hour made it extremely difficult to undertake any artistic activities that required concerted effort and coordination among large numbers of people. Schedules, rehearsals, and especially public performances, which implied crowds and responsibility for their safety, were always subject to cancellation at the last minute. And in any case, the shock of the intensifying civil warfare left most people in no mood to venture out at night to enjoy a play, concert, or film.

Such pressures led to an almost total hiatus in normal activity of any description through 1975–76 and resulted in major losses in the performing arts. The renowned Baalbek Festival was discontinued; the Beirut Community Orchestra disbanded; choral, theater, and musical groups

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temporarily suspended their activities; and regular performances by foreign artists, an important stimulus to the cultural scene in the capital, could no longer be arranged. Many artists fled the fighting, and others, unable to perform or practice in Lebanon, began to take their work abroad, particularly to other Arab countries. An irreparable loss was the death in 1981 of Afif Bulos, director of the Beirut Orpheus Choir and organizer of many fine musicals. Many theaters shut down for prolonged periods, and a number of them, especially during last summer's Israeli siege, were used to shelter the homeless and treat the wounded. Similar problems confronted filmmakers, and it was only with great difficulty that cinemas could obtain any of the American and European films so popular among Beirut audiences. The quality of films, both produced and shown, sharply deteriorated, and very few were worthy of any critical attention. In the prevailing disorder, some cinemas began to screen crude pornography, which until then had rarely been seen in Lebanon.

Beirut audiences, however, have long been avid supporters of film and theater, and when denied enjoyment of it publicly, they began to move it into their homes. The sale of sophisticated video equipment began to soar in 1979; and to serve this market, video lending libraries appeared all over the city, offering feature films, variety programs, and concert and theater productions to the public at nominal cost. In fact, the video system has now replaced the color television as the Lebanese home status symbol par excellence.

Creative activity in the performing arts began to reemerge at a reduced level with the improvement of conditions in the country in 1977; and this was in itself a major achievement, considering that in Lebanon there are no systematic arrangements for state support of the arts. The plight of the country has, of course, figured prominently as a theme in recent work. In cinema, the talented Maroun Baghdadi has recently directed one of the best of Lebanese films, *Hurub Saghira* (Little Wars, the French version of which was a prizewinner at Cannes). A sensitive film made with considerable technical skill, *Hurub Saghira* reduced the war to its starkest and most vicious level, that of the destruction of human relationships and values, the depersonalization of the individual, and the resulting slide into a savage struggle for survival. Even more pronounced, and more important because of its greater public impact, has been the treatment of the crisis in theater. Very good work is being done in the Lebanese theater by Raymond Gebara, Antoine Kerbage, and Ziad Rahbani, and the example of this last artist, a distinguished young actor, musician, and playwright, is particularly illustrative. Rahbani rose to prominence after a successful first play followed by a series of scathing satirical radio shows during the civil

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war; and his productions since then have continued in a satirical vein, with such characters as fools and madmen often the only ones who can see the truth of the situation around them. One play has been set in an asylum, with direct reference to the madness of a nation in the throes of civil war. Like almost all of Arabic theater in Lebanon, Rahbani's plays present their message, often one of tragedy and bitter reflection, behind a facade of uproarious and often outrageous comedy. Many attend his performances solely for their amusement value, but for those who will see it, the message behind this is clear—the old Lebanon is gone forever, and there is no sense in trying to hold on to that which can never be restored.

Revival of the professional Arabic theater has still left ample room for the success of amateur productions, in which the ART Theatre Group (founded in 1957), Beirut University College (BUC), with a fine and vigorous theater program, and the American University of Beirut (AUB) have been most active. The plays presented are usually works of the Western stage rather than original productions, but their effect is by no means marginal. In the face of great obstacles and frequent disappointments, Beirut's amateur theater organizations have staged a long list of plays, ranging from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit,* which almost always have been well received. One original amateur work worth noting here was *The Marchioness of Saden-Saden,* a comic operetta by K. S. Salibi, professor of history at AUB. It was one of the first works to be staged after the violent fighting of 1975–76. Some critics sniffed that it was "irrelevant to our situation"; but *Marchioness* was a welcome relief from the stress of the conflict, and every performance sold out.

It was also in 1977, despite the continuing tensions in the country, that universities and foreign cultural centers resumed vigorous sponsorship of visits by artists from abroad. At the same time, many local professional and amateur organizations resumed activity and have enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the public, the business sector, and the university communities. By the end of 1982, with international peacekeeping forces in place, the security situation in Beirut had improved enough to allow for what is hoped will become a full revival of the performing arts. The Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Choir gave several performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in January 1983, and the Lebanese government, which hopes soon to resume the Baalbek Festival, has included provisions for similar activities in its program for the rebuilding of old downtown Beirut.

Beneath these positive signs of revival, however, there are clear indications of the divisive and debilitating effects of the crisis. Many artists who had avoided sectarian politics before the war now seem to act

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as spokesmen for their respective confessional communities. A play, for example, that in a very abstract way compares Lebanon's situation to that of Deutero-Isaiah's servant, who suffers and then is redeemed according to a divine plan, is specifically Christian, rather than national, in its symbolism; regardless of its theatrical merit, other confessional communities can hardly avoid the conclusion that it is a sectarian statement. Performers and producers thus came to be associated, sometimes with good reason but often groundlessly, with particular factional views, with the result that many could not work in other parts of town, or if they did, they ran the risk of substantial misinterpretation. It is also worth noting that although the crisis has received considerable attention, this treatment is not didactic; that is, it laments or protests what has happened but offers no positive solution. This has much to do with the fact that the wounds and divisions of the conflict are too deep for an immediate exercise in national introspection. People will go to traditional dance and music programs, folkloric productions, presentations of Western work, and other kinds of entertainment that indicate that the old Lebanon still survives. The artist can address the nation's difficulties, but must do so behind a veil of comedy. Stark drama that allows for no escape from its specific message cannot draw an audience and thus seldom finds the financial support required for production.

No less important on the cultural scene in Beirut are the fine arts. These were developing strongly in the early 1970s, when a critical taste, fostering a sense of appreciation and criteria for judging good and bad work, was beginning to emerge. Numerous galleries offered a wide variety of Western and Middle Eastern art to the public, and it became a prestigious symbol of social status to use displays of original art to decorate one's home. The fine arts in Beirut were strongly stimulated by two important centers of activity: the John F. Kennedy Center, which arranged visits by foreign artists and offered a full schedule of films, lectures, discussions, and exhibitions, and the fine arts department of AUB, which served as an important center for social activity and the exchange of ideas. These two centers were also Beirut's primary links to foreign stimuli, particularly from the art circles of the United States. Other foreign cultural centers, especially West Germany's Goethe-Institut, were also very active.

The war, of course, disrupted all this in very serious ways. Important galleries in the combat zone were destroyed, and the others closed; both the Lebanese National Museum and the Sursock Museum, with an important collection of art, closed down and shipped many objects out to safer locations. Neither the Kennedy Center nor the AUB fine arts department, both the victims of budget cuts, has survived; their loss has tended to aggravate the isolation, resulting from war conditions in the

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country, of the Lebanese artist from the international art scene. Most serious was the effect on the artist as a creative individual, for fine art can only flourish in an environment of tolerance, stability, and affluence, which ensure freedom of artistic expression and provide the market for the artist's work. As all these collapsed in 1975–76, many artists left Lebanon, and those who remained found it difficult to work. The tendency of Lebanese art to be cliquish was heavily promoted by the war, which tended to sidetrack artistic talent into political propaganda and poster art, and thus led to the labeling (often based on dubious speculation) of particular artists as spokesmen for various factions, with the same results noted above in the case of the performing arts. Honest critical evaluation, so important for the growth of the artist and the culture he represents, has often been difficult to obtain in such an atmosphere: in one case known to this writer, the results of the judging of an important show were not announced because the final list of outstanding works "underrepresented" one confessional group.

Interest in and demand for good art reemerged after the restoration of a modicum of order in late 1976, but it quickly became apparent that several interesting changes had occurred. In some respects demand for art rose, as people spending more time at home paid greater attention to decor, just as they turned to video to compensate for the loss of film and theater. Of particular interest were smaller items that could be removed easily in the event that relocation became necessary. Subject treatment also tended to narrow, since what the public wanted was not the innovative, but the escapist: traditional Lebanese scenes or works with no specific reference to Lebanon or the Middle East. Reflecting the fissures in the social fabric of the country, works with specifically Christian, Islamic, Arab, or Lebanese connotations now tend to provoke different reactions in various parts of Beirut, depending on the views prevailing there concerning Christianity, Islam, Arabism, or the national character of Lebanon. A painting of a traditional Arab coffeehouse scene, for example, might evoke no response from a Lebanese observer who relates his sense of national identity to his country's ties to the West, but it might fascinate another who considers Lebanon's Arab heritage to be a fundamental basis for his own sense of national identity. Similarly, the presence of certain symbols (especially religious or local) in such a work will have the immediate effect of giving it (whether by the artist's intent or not) a particular sectarian, as opposed to national, identity and so narrowing its appeal.

There are, however, certain grounds for optimism for the future of the fine arts in Beirut. The artistic social scene is now beginning to recover. BUC, which has made major commitments to teaching and presentation of the fine arts, has already begun to take over AUB's former leading

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position; and the European cultural centers, particularly the well-placed Goethe-Institut, are filling part of the gap left by the closure of the Kennedy Center. The Sursock Museum has recently reopened, and the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts has initiated concerted efforts to stimulate art activities. The improvement in security after late 1976 has led to the reopening of old galleries and the appearance of new ones. Two of these latter, the Galerie Épreuve d'Artiste and the Galerie d'Art Bikhazi, have been particularly active, offering good shows and stimulating opportunities for discussion and criticism. And while it is true that the public has tended to react most positively to pieces that do not confront it with the reality of the war, critical circles in Beirut remain sensitive to honest artistic statements on the conflict. A noteworthy example of this is the reaction to the recent work of Martin Giesen, a German professor of art history at AUB who has taken a stark realistic approach to the conflict, portraying shattered buildings, desolate streets, and individuals contemplating in solitude their own condition and future. This is quite daring, since it strikes very sensitive nerves so soon after the horrific experiences of the summer of 1982; but it has been well received critically, and Lebanese president Amin Gemayel has chosen two of Giesen's latest works for his summer residence. The initial public reaction to his new work in a recent show was quite positive, and this favorable reception can be expected to encourage Lebanese artists to treat the conflict in similar ways in their own works.

In the domain of literature, the effect of the Lebanese crisis has been less pronounced, since the country has not had a strong tradition of literary fiction since the days of Gibran (d. 1931) and Rihani (d. 1940). Poetry has been the forte of the Lebanese literati, but it provides little basis for generalization. The renowned Adonis, for example, writes on such a universal level that it is difficult to discern any specific effect of the crisis in his work. The verse of the late Khalil Hawi tended to stress such themes as perseverance in the face of disaster and the refusal of man to accept defeat, but it presented the personal perspective of a complex literary genius whom few understood.

On a more general level, however, the influence of the conflict on the literary scene has been quite pronounced. The escalation of internal tension since 1975 has intensified interest in the perennial debate (with its important political implications) over the character of Lebanon. Is the country an integral part of the Arab world, or an entity distinguished and set apart from it by its large Christian community and its close ties to the West? Where do Lebanon's "roots" lie? Debate on these questions has led to the growth of an enormous and varied literature on culture and the Lebanese heritage. Space allotted to cultural affairs in Beirut's many daily newspapers has expanded dramatically since 1975; the capital's

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publishing houses (about three hundred at last count) are offering more and more titles on culture and the national tradition; and the number of journals edited in Beirut and dealing with such subjects has also swelled.

There is, however, a certain difficulty involved in this activity, in that it tends to polarize the Lebanese further rather than to provide a forum for a constructive national discussion. The tendency more prevalent in West Beirut sees and presents Lebanese culture in terms of its Arab context, in which Islamic history and thought play an important role. Enormous numbers of classical Arabic/Islamic texts are published or reprinted here; excellent journals such as *Al-Fikr al-'arabi* (Arab Thought) and *Al-Fikr al-'arabi al-mu'asir* (Contemporary Arab Thought) are edited; and events such as the Islamic conquests and the career of Saladin are deemed part of a distinguished Arab heritage in which Lebanon, too, has played a role. Another tendency, dominant in East Beirut, regards Lebanon as a country with a specifically national identity extending back to ancient Phoenicia. In this vision of Lebanon, Arabism and Islam are, at best, side issues and, at worst, aspects of an interlude of foreign domination. Emphasis is instead placed on such topics as the antiquities and history of Phoenicia, Eastern Christianity, and Lebanon's links with the cultures and nations of the non-Arab world, particularly France. This divisive dialectic is further fueled by the extensive literature published in the country since 1976 on the causes and events of the Lebanese crisis. Some of this literature is based on serious scholarly research, but far more consists of memoirs and accounts of an apologetic or polemical nature.

At the heart of culture and learning in Beirut are the city's institutions of higher education, which numbered at least eight (depending on one's criteria) by 1975. That so many could survive and even prosper in Beirut is an indication of the great respect and support higher education enjoys in Lebanon. The country has a highly developed system of private secondary education, and most students and their families regard a bachelor's degree as extremely important. High school graduates have a broad range of alternatives open to them. Some of Beirut's institutions of higher education are venerable universities with academic programs begun in Ottoman times, such as AUB (founded in 1866) and the Université Saint-Joseph (established in Beirut in 1875); others, such as the Université Libanaise (founded in 1951), are more recent creations. Instruction is available in English and French as well as Arabic, and most students recognize the distinct advantage of an education in a foreign language. A broad range of programs of study is available, and all but the most specialized students need go no farther than the capital for a solid university education.

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Beirut universities and colleges have also played an important role in the cultural life of the capital, as evidenced by the activities of AUB and BUC, mentioned above, in the arts. University facilities and administrative assistance are frequently available for other non-university activities, as well, and serve to integrate the academic community into the city as a whole. This trend is further reinforced by the fact that noteworthy achievements in culture and learning so often come from the faculties of Beirut's universities. Adonis, for example, teaches at the Université Libanaise, and Khalil Hawi held an endowed chair in Arabic at AUB until his untimely death in June 1982. Charles Malik, one of the greatest of modern Arab intellectuals, held the honor of distinguished professor in philosophy at AUB; at the same university, Elie Salem, now Lebanon's foreign minister and deputy prime minister, was, until his appointment, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences and a professor of political science with numerous publications.

Higher education has necessarily suffered as a result of the conflict. Enrollment dropped sharply in 1975–76, and some facilities and resources were damaged or destroyed. Many students and faculty left the country, and Lebanon for the first time began to suffer, though to a lesser extent, the kind of "brain drain" that so frequently plagues Third World countries. There also developed a certain demoralization, a numbing exhaustion, from the emotional and physical effort required to study, teach, and conduct research under highly adverse conditions. But it is difficult to generalize, since the conflict has affected Beirut's universities in different ways.

Most illustrative of this is the Université Libanaise, which as the national university has become a microcosm of the situation in Lebanon. In order to continue to serve students in what amounted to a divided country, it established separate facilities on both sides of Beirut. This ad hoc measure has become an enduring reality and tends to foster an enervating spirit of suspicion and rivalry between the two parts. Similarly, the need to reproduce the Lebanese confessional balance on the faculty makes it difficult to establish and maintain a teaching staff with the right expertise and interests to suit the university's program, and the exodus of Lebanese scholars has only made matters worse. Finally, the university's Faculty of Science, a fine teaching and research facility and the institution's primary strength, was destroyed during the Israeli siege. The future of the university is thus uncertain, and the decisive factor would seem to be the ultimate resolution of Lebanon's problems generally. Its fate can hardly differ from that of the nation it represents.

The case of Université Saint-Joseph offers a different perspective. Located in the old downtown area, it was on the front line of East Beirut during the civil war. Though an independent institution, its ties with the

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Jesuits caused it to be associated with the Christian militias, and so to become a target for shellfire. Its facilities were extensively damaged, and its various schools scattered to more secure locations. Even after late 1976, continued danger in the area made it difficult to maintain a regular academic program. Access was often limited to side streets sheltered from sniper fire, which nevertheless claimed the lives of several students. In such an atmosphere, it was a major achievement for the university simply to survive.

As the Green Line is no longer a battle zone, Saint-Joseph's fortunes have taken a dramatic turn for the better. Enrollment is expanding at a rapid rate, owing primarily to the university's diversified programs and to the current problems facing the Université Libanaise, which have led many French-educated students to prefer Saint-Joseph. Sectarian issues do not arise, since the school is predominantly Christian. The administration has plans for further growth, but this is, of course, dependent upon the security situation in the downtown area.

The most important institution of higher education in Beirut is without doubt the American University of Beirut. An independent university located on a sprawling parklike campus overlooking the Mediterranean in West Beirut, AUB has teaching faculties in the arts and sciences, agriculture, engineering, health sciences, and medicine and operates one of the best teaching hospitals in the Middle East. Its faculty and students have traditionally come from all over the world, and many of the leading political and business figures of the Arab world are AUB graduates.

AUB has been the most successful in maintaining itself through the crisis. This is partly because of the university's relatively secure position and its virtual self-sufficiency, but primarily because of the important role of its medical center in treating the injured and its reputation as a purely educational institution with no ties to any faction. Protection of this status has been a difficult and delicate task, but it has been largely successful in upholding AUB's neutrality. Militias in West Beirut generally respected its grounds, and local ad hoc authorities ensured that refugees did not overrun the campus; gunners in East Beirut, even in times of indiscriminate shelling, took pains to aim their artillery elsewhere.

Tension, of course, remained very high, and a number of tragic incidents did occur; but, except for the fall of 1975 and the summer of 1982, the university has been able to offer a continuous academic program. At the same time, a number of important changes have occurred. Difficulties at other institutions have brought more students to AUB from a French educational background, different in method as well as in language. Accommodation of such students compels the university

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to devote greater attention to such matters as language skills. Both the student body and the faculty are more predominantly Lebanese, with fewer foreign scholars on the faculty and a sharp decline in non-Arab enrollment. This has significantly diluted the university's international atmosphere. At the same time, AUB's strictly neutral line has caused it to be regarded with suspicion in some government quarters.

Such problems have not, however, prevented AUB from enhancing its leading academic role in Lebanon. Enrollment has been rising since 1977, and qualified applications so vastly exceed admissions capacity that plans for expansion are under consideration. New academic programs have been established, and extensive renovations are underway at the university library. Research activity by the faculty has been quite vigorous, and since 1977 AUB has been the site of ten major international conferences on a broad range of academic topics. In 1982 it was one of the centers for the James Joyce Centenary Commemoration.

From the foregoing observations I believe one can discern the broad outlines of a general pattern of how the events of the past eight years have affected learning and culture in Beirut and, indeed, in Lebanon as a whole. At the most obvious level one can speak of a general process of collapse, parallel to the intensifying military dimension of the conflict, beginning in early 1975 and culminating in the fall of 1976. But by early 1977 signs of recovery began to appear. Two aspects of this revival are of special interest. First, it emerged and expanded under conditions of persistent tension and insecurity that, one would think, should have precluded such a development. Second, although culture and learning have marked a significant revival in Beirut since 1977, the forms they have taken clearly indicate that the artist and the intellectual have both been deeply affected by the divisive impact of the conflict.

To appreciate the implications of these points, one must recall that Lebanon, like many other Middle East nations, is a land of great social, religious, and ethnic variety. The many groups that make up its population have always differed on numerous fundamental issues, but in the past have realized that their own survival and prosperity can only be guaranteed by establishment of a basis for cooperation among all the Lebanese. This was given formal expression in the National Pact of 1943, in which the various sides attempted to resolve their differences through agreement upon a median position acceptable to all.

But this was only an outer manifestation of a far more important phenomenon—the consecration of a national ideal. A nation can survive and truly flourish only when its people believe that it represents some ideal which is significant to them and for the sake of which they are willing to make considerable personal sacrifices. In many ways, this ideal is simply a matter of national myth—that is, a lofty goal that

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provides a sense of national purpose, as opposed to an already realized objective that needs only to be preserved. But such a myth is no less effective as an integrative force, and eventually it becomes a reality in itself as it gains the support of the people and exerts an influence on the way they think and act.

The ideal underlying the National Pact was that the Lebanese, despite their differences, could live and work together in harmony in a system guaranteeing the security and integrity of all the various confessional communities. The conviction that Lebanon could succeed where others failed was possible because this ideal was permeated by a pronounced sense of national eminence. The Lebanese conceived of their nation as a great international crossroads of culture where the best qualities of the West and the Arab world were fused, and they viewed themselves as "middlemen," interpreting West to East and East to West. Lebanon thus possessed, according to this view, an importance and refinement not to be found in other Arab countries.

In Lebanon, no less than in the rest of the Third World, national ideals must, in a very Faustian way, constantly be reconfirmed and reasserted in order to counter the divisive pressures that continue to confront the nation from without and within. In this respect, culture and learning in Beirut have been critically important. The vigorous cultural and intellectual life in the "Paris of the East," accessible within two hours from almost anywhere in the country, was continual positive proof that the Lebanese could indeed work together in harmony, that their ability to do so had enabled them to realize a quality of life unparalleled in the area, and in sum, that the ideal of "Lebanon" was a living force of direct importance to every Lebanese.

Nevertheless, the delicate balance among the various confessional groups was always precarious, and when external disputes (such as inter-Arab tensions, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and superpower rivalries) were added as further issues for argument among the Lebanese, the whole system weakened and finally collapsed into armed conflict in 1975. The events since then have dealt serious blows to the national ideal that once united Lebanon. As usually happens in civil wars, the Lebanese split into a complex array of factions, from within which the individual no longer regarded members of other groups as social colleagues and fellow Lebanese, but rather dehumanized them into symbols of abstract categories (Muslim/Maronite/Palestinian—hence, "the enemy," "a murderer," "a criminal") and subjected them to increasing levels of fear, rage, and contempt. The savagery and wanton brutality that characterized much of the conflict show how far this process of dehumanization had gone and illustrate the general collapse of the accord that had made Lebanon possible. The most critical issue facing the country, therefore,

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goes beyond the problem of how to rid it of foreign occupying forces to the fundamental question of how a new basis for unity can be established and what the future character of Lebanon should be. This would be a difficult issue to address in the best of circumstances, with a unified country and time to adjust gradually to a new situation. But in Lebanon it must be faced by a divided people under enormous external pressure.

Not surprisingly, then, there is no longer a single ideal or set of ideals to which all Lebanese look as a basis for national unity. Instead, there are now several such ideals, each with its own advocates and each vociferously clamoring for support as the basis for the rebuilding of a new Lebanon. And just as the national exponents of culture and learning had played an important role in upholding the old system, they are now deeply involved in the debate over what the new one should be. But many artists and intellectuals have assumed partisan positions, some out of sincere personal conviction and others for reasons of opportunity. Both, however, are maligned by critics who may themselves have taken equally factional stands, but on another side. Others have sought to employ their artistic or intellectual skills to address the issues before the nation in a wholly impartial way; but as in Thucydides' Corcyra, civil war tends to reduce the position of neutrality and moderation to the locus where the suspicions and frustrations of all factions meet. The artist, poet, playwright, and scholar all know that their confessional identity—and this is often recognized (or presumed) from the person's name—may result in the misinterpretation of their work as a partisan challenge. It is thus difficult to make an honest statement; but even more problematic is the question of how to make one with specific content, for even the issues one addresses or the material one presents open the way to charges of partiality. Lebanon is full of Guernicas, but who can select one for consideration without misrepresenting himself to those who suffered in all the others, and so, almost by default, compromising his own avowed neutrality? This was until recently an especially insidious problem, since it could also lead to violent reprisals if one's work came to be regarded as particularly offensive or threatening.

This is not to say that productive discussion has not taken place: it has, but predominantly within the ranks of the separate groups rather than between one group and another. Discussion among political, artistic, and intellectual figures of differing convictions is obstructed by such problems as suspicion of the others' motives and goals and unwillingness to take clear stands on volatile issues. What can be and is said among confidants, in other words, is a matter of considerable speculation and suspicion among outsiders.

Could one say, then, that by an ironic twist of history the same individuals who had played such an important role in upholding the

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ideal so crucial to national unity are now playing an equally important role in perpetuating the fragmentation of the country? Those who would respond to this query in the affirmative are missing the point that, as the history of numerous nations proves, civil war opens wounds that are not easily healed. The process of reconstruction is slow and painful, and in its early stages it must be expected to bear signs of the continuing divisions and suspicions that had marked the course of the conflict.

Also, the fragmentation of communications and activity in artistic and intellectual circles is not all due to sectarian divisions. A great deal of it is the result of the process of decentralization of Lebanese culture. In the past, an aspiring artist or scholar had, of necessity, to make his way to the capital in order to draw serious attention to his work. But the persistent insecurity in Beirut, coupled with the effect the conflict has had of promoting ties with one's own hometown or local area, have now partially reversed this trend. For example, the poets Buzay' and Shams ad-Din do not write for the critics in Beirut; they speak directly to the people of their local areas in south Lebanon. Some theater groups have begun traveling through the countryside and to smaller towns, performing brief skits and folkloric programs (called the *hakawati*) on short notice and often with only improvised props and staging arrangements. On "the Eastern side," Kaslik and Jounieh have been the scenes of cultural events that earlier would have been confined to Beirut. The impact of the crisis is clear enough here, but it would be mistaken to gloss this decentralization as the specific outcome of sectarian factors alone.

It must also be noted that throughout the country, discussion is essentially about what kind of new Lebanon should emerge from the ruins of the old, not whether the country should be preserved or not. Lebanese discuss partition (and other possibilities that would mean the end of the country) in the same way that Americans discuss nuclear war: everyone is aware of it as a danger not to be ignored, but no one in his right mind wants to see it occur. None of the Lebanese factions or their leaders have ever called for partition or a condominium or secession of their local territory. They claim legitimacy and demand obedience not as sovereign authorities but as ad hoc guarantors of security and order in the areas they control. At the same time, criticism of the central government—whether by factional elements, in the press, on stage, or in public forums—has inveighed against the ineffectiveness of those who hold office but has not questioned the principle of unified central authority. Indicative of this attitude is the emergence of two new national symbols—the outline of the political boundaries of Lebanon and the number 10,452, the area of the country in square kilometers. These symbols have become extremely popular, especially since the

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Israeli invasion and occupation of the south, and they reflect a general determination that whatever the other conflicts in the Middle East may be, they will not be resolved at Lebanon's expense. The Lebanese are undoubtedly wrestling with very serious difficulties in their efforts to reach an accord on how they should rebuild their country, but they do not question their ultimate ability and will as a nation to do so.

Exponents of culture and learning in Beirut have shown a remarkable ability to adapt and a stubborn determination to persevere in the face of extremely adverse conditions. This is a consequence of a final aspect of the Lebanese national ideal. Even in the worst days of the civil war, people regarded "the events" as merely temporary and continued to plan and live their lives in the belief that, in the end, Lebanon would emerge from the chaos intact. The most astonishing indicators of the strength of this ideal have been in the economic rather than the cultural domain. The Lebanese pound remained stable throughout the conflict, even when the banks were closed and rumors were rife that the nation's gold reserves had been spirited away. New construction boomed in Beirut after 1976, and Lebanese investors have committed enormous sums to ambitious building projects, even though they have had numerous opportunities for investment abroad (upon which Lebanese law places no controls) and have had no more than their confidence in Lebanon's future to outweigh the danger that their resort, office, or high-rise apartment buildings might be shelled or overrun by refugees. Many new banks have opened since the war began, and deposits have doubled since 1974.

Reflected in these attitudes and activities is a determined Lebanese confidence in the long-term future of the country. Thus, one could say that it has been almost as an act of faith that they have set about the task of reviving cultural and intellectual activity in the capital in utter defiance of the logic of events and conditions demonstrating that the conflict was far from over. Such broadly based resolve seems to indicate that as grievous as the damage may be, the national will to survive and rebuild remains intact. So long as it remains so, there will continue to exist a firm basis for optimism for the future of the country. Though eventual recovery in Lebanon might astound some observers, it would come as no surprise to the Lebanese, for whom the solutions to serious problems in the past have never been a matter of "if," but rather only of "how" and "when."

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Engels in Manchester

Inventing the Proletariat

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

FRIEDRICH ENGELS, WRITING IN 1845, described Chartism as only one manifestation of the "social war" that was being waged in England, a war that was bound to issue in a full-scale revolution. And this not in the remote future but within a few years, following the economic crisis he predicted for 1846–47, or the one after that in 1852–53.

> The proletarians, driven to despair, will seize the torch which Stephens [the Chartist] has preached to them; the vengeance of the people will come down with a wrath of which the rage of 1793 gives no true idea. The war of the poor against the rich will be the bloodiest ever waged. Even the union of a part of the bourgeoisie with the proletariat, even a general reform of the bourgeoisie, would not help matters. . . . The revolution must come; it is already too late to bring about a peaceful solution.

Nothing could now prevent that revolution. All that could be hoped for was some mitigation of the violence, and that would depend on the "development" of the proletariat. "In proportion, as the proletariat absorbs socialistic and communistic elements, will the revolution diminish in bloodshed, revenge, and savagery," noted Engels.

In most commentaries on Engels's book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, this scenario of revolution has been dismissed as a *folie de jeunesse*, a youthful excess of zeal that was surely mistaken, at least in its timing, but that did not seriously affect the substance of the book or the subject denoted by the title. Engels himself was so little discomfited by the patent failure of this prediction that, in supervising the English edition almost half a century later, he let stand the whole of this passage (and others to the same effect), noting only that he had been right in predicting the repeal of the Corn Laws.

Questions have been raised about the accuracy of Engels's citation of

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documents and the accuracy of the documents themselves, about the bias in his selection of sources and the bias in the sources themselves, about the representativeness of his examples and the validity of his generalizations. But there is another question that is no less important. To what extent was his account of the condition of the English working class shaped by his prognosis of social war and revolution? He himself claimed that the class struggle and revolution were the logical, necessary consequences of the total impoverishment of the proletariat—its "immiseration" in the language of later Marxism. One may well be wary of an ostensibly descriptive or empirical account of the condition of the English working class that so neatly confirmed Engels's ideological predispositions. This does not necessarily invalidate his account; it may be that his ideology was firmly rooted in the actuality. It does, however, mean that the whole of the historical record has to be examined: the reports, articles, and books cited by Engels, his personal observations and reflections, and another set of sources he did not cite or make explicit—the ideas he brought with him to his study of the English working class. To raise this issue is not to subject him to any special or invidious kind of examination. It is only to take seriously ideas he himself took seriously. In the preface to the English edition written many years later, he observed that the book revealed the "stamp of his youth," "traces of the descent of modern Socialism from one of its ancestors, German philosophy"—by which he meant that he had not yet emancipated himself from the philosophy and politics of Young Hegelianism.

Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England was published in Leipzig in 1845; the first English language edition appeared in 1887 in America, and in 1892 in England, under the title *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. The date in the English title reminds us that almost half a century intervened between the book's original publication and its first appearance in England, a period during which the book was known only in Germany (and mainly in the German radical movement) and not at all in the country that was the object of its concern (except perhaps among the small group of German émigrés in London). Whatever else may be said about it—as social reportage, ideological polemic, literary text, psychobiographical revelation, or "semiotic" exercise—Engels's book was not, in the context of early Victorian England, a contemporary document in the way that Carlyle's or Cobbett's writings were. It was contemporary in the sense of being contemporaneous with the period it was describing. But it had no public resonance, no echoes in public opinion, no part in the shaping of the public consciousness. Later, to be sure, the book did enter the public domain, at a time, not by accident, when English socialism finally emerged as an important force.

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It has since become so much a part of the historical record, of the consciousness of historians if not of contemporaries, that it has been accused of unduly dominating that record. For this reason as well as its intrinsic interest—as a picture of the English working classes seen through the eyes of a German radical newly resident in England—*The Condition of the Working Class in England* is a fascinating historical document.

Engels was twenty-two years old when he arrived in Manchester in November 1842 to join a textile firm in which his father was a partner. He remained in England for twenty-one months and started his book after his return to Germany in September 1844; it was completed by March and published in May. These bare facts are suggestive enough, although they hardly begin to tell the story. By the time the young man came to England, he had been initiated into the various factions of German radicalism known collectively as Young (or Left) Hegelianism, had met the leading figures in that movement (Wilhelm Weitling, Moses Hess, Bruno and Heinrich Bauer, Arnold Ruge, and Karl Marx), had published articles on various subjects (including an attack on the mill owners of his own town, of which his father was one), and had become a regular contributor to the radical journal, the *Rheinische Zeitung*. Before leaving for England he paid two visits to Cologne to meet with the staff of the *Zeitung*. On one occasion he was coolly received by the newly appointed editor, Karl Marx, who disapproved of his association with the "Freien" sect in Berlin, the extremist faction led by the Bauers and Ruge. Another editor, Moses Hess, befriended him and engaged him in long discussions. "We spoke about current questions," Hess wrote to a friend several months later, "and he, an Anno I revolutionary, departed from me an enthusiastic communist." Those "current questions" must have included England, for Hess had just published his book, *Die europäische Triarchie*, describing the three stages in the history of human emancipation: the German Reformation that he identified with religious freedom, the French Revolution with political freedom, and a future English revolution with social freedom.

When Engels arrived in England it was as a confirmed communist and an avowed revolutionary. His first weeks were spent in London, and either then or on a subsequent visit he met the German colony of exiled revolutionaries, members of the League of the Just who had been implicated in the Blanquist uprising in Paris in 1839; they were, he later explained, the first "proletarian revolutionaries" he had met. During his first week in London he wrote three articles for the *Rheinische Zeitung*, one of which assured his German readers that the inherent "contradictions" in the English economy could be resolved only by revolution. No

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sooner had he installed himself in Manchester than he sent off an article entitled "The Condition of the Working Class in England," which opened by asserting that that condition was becoming "daily more precarious," in spite of the fact that unemployment had recently decreased and the English worker was generally in a far better state than the German or French worker.

> The worker there [in Germany and France] earns just enough to allow him to live on bread and potatoes; he is lucky if he can buy meat once a week. Here he eats beef every day and gets a more nourishing joint for his money than the richest man in Germany. He drinks tea twice a day and still has enough money left over to be able to drink a glass of porter at midday and brandy and water in the evening. This is how most of the Manchester workers live who work a twelve-hour day.

This affluence, however, was temporary, for the smallest fluctuation of trade would throw thousands out of work, and a major depression was in the offing.

In the following months, in the spare time left him from business, Engels managed to write a series of articles for a German émigré magazine in Zurich (the *Rheinische Zeitung* having ceased publication), other articles for the Owenite *New Moral World* and the Chartist *Northern Star*, and a long essay, "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy," for the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* edited by Marx and Ruge in Paris. When the Soviet translator of the "Critique" later commented on the lingering traces of "ethical 'philosophical' communism" and "abstract principles of universal morals and humaneness," he had in mind such passages as that on the private ownership of land: "To make land an object of huckstering . . . was the last step towards making oneself an object of huckstering. It was and is to this very day an immorality surpassed only by the immorality of self-alienation." For the most part, however, the "Critique" was an impassioned but not notably "philosophical" or moralistic analysis, using the language and concepts of political economy—wealth, value, price, capital, rent, wages—to criticize the system of private property that the political economists took for granted. That system, Engels argued, was destined to collapse as a result of its inherent contradictions. Competition would lead to monopoly and the centralization of property; economic crises would become more acute and widespread; the world would be divided into capitalists and workers and eventually, with the impoverishment of the small capitalists, into millionaires and paupers; wages would decline to the point where the worker received "only the very barest necessities, the mere means of subsistence"; and the final crisis would result in the abolition of private property and the "total transformation of social

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conditions." (Fifteen years later Marx, in his own *Critique of Political Economy*, paid tribute to Engels's "brilliant outline" that anticipated his own in so many respects.)

The final words of Engels's essay read like an advertisement for *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Having raised the question of machinery and the factory system, Engels explained that that subject was beyond the scope of the present essay. "Besides," he added, "I hope to have an early opportunity to expound in detail the despicable immorality of this system, and to expose mercilessly the economist's hypocrisy which here appears in all its brazenness." The allusion was to the book he was planning on the political and economic state of England, with a chapter or two on the working class. He published two articles on that subject in yet another German émigré magazine in the summer of 1844. That same summer, returning from England, Engels stopped off in Paris to meet the exiled revolutionaries assembled there, including Karl Marx. That visit marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship and collaboration between the two men. It may also have been then, perhaps on the advice of Marx, that Engels decided to devote the whole of his forthcoming book to the English working class.

Returning to his home in Barmen in the Rhineland, Engels immersed himself in the books and newspapers he had brought with him from England—not, however, to the exclusion of political activities. He joined Hess in founding a new radical periodical, helped organize a working-class society, addressed two public meetings in which he explained why the continued expansion and impoverishment of the proletariat would lead to a social revolution "in a very short time," continued to write for the *New Moral World* and various German radical publications, and contributed his small part to *The Holy Family* (Marx's polemic against the Bauers and Stirner)—all this during the six or seven months in which he also wrote the 300-odd-page *Condition of the Working Class in England*. It was a prodigious accomplishment, testifying to his extraordinary intellectual vitality and his total political commitment.

Even if one were unaware of the ideological background of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, one could not fail to see in it a good deal more than a descriptive account of that "condition." At the very least it included an analysis of the system responsible for that condition, a moral critique of both the condition and the system, and a prognosis of the development of the system and its eventual destruction by those who suffered so grievously under it. In a letter to Marx written soon after he started work on the book, Engels explained that he was drawing up a "bill of indictment" against the English bourgeoisie and, by the same token, against the German bourgeoisie.

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I shall present the English with a fine bill of indictment. I accuse the English bourgeoisie before the entire world of murder, robbery and all sorts of other crimes on a mass scale, and am writing an English preface which I shall have printed separately and shall send to the English party leaders, literary men and Members of Parliament. Those fellows will have to remember me. Moreover, it is a matter of course that while I hit the bay I also mean to strike the donkey, namely, the German bourgeoisie, of whom I say clearly enough that it is just as bad as the English, only not so courageous, consistent and adept in sweat-shop methods.

In the book itself Engels was entirely candid about his purpose, at least in respect to the English. In the preface addressed to "the Working Classes of Great Britain," he identified himself with the workers in the struggle against their "oppressors," and throughout the book he spoke of the middle classes as "murderers," the social order as a systematic form of "social murder," and the class struggle as a form of "social war."

The bill of indictment consisted of descriptions, episodes, and statistics culled from parliamentary reports, newspapers, books, and pamphlets, supplemented by Engels's own observations and judgments. The effect was a picture of desperate, hopeless misery: workers dying of starvation or so malnourished and enfeebled as to be on the verge of death, fifty thousand homeless people wandering the streets of London and millions more crowded into the meanest, foulest slums, all of them clothed in rags, exposed to the damp and cold, their bodies sickly, crippled, stunted, deformed. The moral state of these unfortunates was no less appalling, as they drowned their sorrows in drink, vented their rage in crime and violence, and lost themselves in the only indulgence left to them, sexual licentiousness. As misery and vice was the refrain of Malthus's work, so degradation and demoralization was the refrain of Engels's.

Occasionally Engels raised the issue that has exercised his critics: Was the condition he described the extreme or the average condition of the working class? What part of the working class was in that state of destitution, degradation, and demoralization? In the course of one chapter, caustically entitled "The Great Towns," he estimated that one-tenth of the workers were utterly degraded, that 12 percent lived in the foulest cellars, and that "the average is much nearer the worst cases than the best"—the "worst" having just been described as "bitter want, reaching even homelessness and death by starvation." Potentially every worker was in that worst condition. "Every proletarian, everyone, without exception, is exposed to a similar fate without any fault of his own and in spite of every possible effort."

It could be said that Engels's portrait was so stark because the reality itself was stark. He had arrived in Manchester, the worst of all industrial

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towns—"the shock city of the age," as Asa Briggs has aptly called it—at the worst of all times, in the midst of the most severe economic depression in half a century. Even then, however, as he himself reported in the first of his newspaper articles from Manchester, less than 10 percent of the workers were unemployed, and those who were employed could afford a quantity and quality of meat and drink that would have been the envy of the German or French worker. Engels did not reproduce that passage, or anything like it, in his book, but he could have done so without any logical inconsistency (although it would have detracted from the prevailing impression of gloom). For the point was not so much the actual, existential condition of the worker as his essential and potential condition, the condition that was his simply by virtue of his being a "proletarian," a member of the propertyless class. It was this state of propertylessness that doomed the worker to the "worst" condition even if, for the moment, he seemed to be in a "better" or "best" condition. In this sense the question of percentages and averages was irrelevant, since it was the extreme, not the average, that was the essential condition of the whole of the working class.

In the same sense, every aspect of the worker's being, his moral and intellectual as much as his economic and physical condition, was in that extreme state. One might have expected a bourgeois reformer like Edwin Chadwick to speak of the working class as a "race" so thoroughly degraded and demoralized that it "must really have reached the lowest stage of humanity," or to describe dwellings in which "only a physically degenerate race, robbed of all humanity, degraded, reduced morally and intellectually to bestiality, could feel comfortable and at home." It was, in fact, from Chadwick and his kind—J. P. Kay (later Kay-Shuttleworth), Peter Gaskell, Nassau Senior, and other "bourgeois" reformers, critics, and investigators—that Engels took his material. He went further than they did, however, because his purpose was different. They wanted to arouse the consciousness and conscience (and perhaps the fears as well) of the middle classes in order to promote specific reforms. Engels wanted to portray the workers in that condition of destitution and degradation which was a prelude not to reform but to revolution, a revolution to restore the humanity that the present system denied to them.

There was no hidden agenda here, no secret strategy. Engels was quite explicit about the revolutionary implications of his account. Again and again he interrupted his description of the vile state of the workers to hold out the promise of redemption, the redemption that would come, not as the result of rebellion, but in the very act of rebellion. The impulse to rebel was the saving grace, the one glimmer of humanity in an otherwise dehumanized race.

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There is, therefore, no cause for surprise if the workers, treated as brutes, actually become such; or if they can maintain their consciousness of manhood only by cherishing the most glowing hatred, the most unbroken inward rebellion against the bourgeoisie in power. They are men so long only as they burn with wrath against the reigning class. They become brutes the moment they bend in patience under the yoke, and merely strive to make life endurable while abandoning the effort to break the yoke.

. . . How can such a sentence [to the division of labor] help degrading a human being to the level of a brute? Once more the worker must choose, must either surrender himself to his fate, become a "good" workman, heed "faithfully" the interest of the bourgeoisie, in which case he most certainly becomes a brute, or else he must rebel, fight for his manhood to the last, and this he can only do in the fight against the bourgeoisie.

At every point the same message came through: the condition of brutality was the precondition for change, the only kind of change that was of any consequence—revolution. "The Great Towns" opened with a memorable description of hordes of people crowded together, streaming past one another, yet brutally indifferent to and entirely separated from one another. It was an altogether repulsive sight, repugnant to human nature itself. "This isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking, is the fundamental principle of our society elsewhere, [and] it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just there in the crowding of the great city." The "dissolution of mankind into nomads" reminded Engels of the recent book by Max Stirner, the most anarchistic of the Young Hegelians, who described all of society, and capitalist society preeminently, as a "war of each against all." In this atomistic, ferociously competitive world, everyone looked upon everyone else as an object to be used and exploited, and the capitalists, being the strongest, were able to seize everything for themselves, leaving the mass of the poor with the barest means of existence. But these same cities, the breeding places of misery and vice, were also—and here Engels parted from Stirner—the "birthplaces of the labor movements." Were it not for the cities, the workers, isolated and exploited as individuals, would have been slower in coming to a consciousness of their oppression, of their class interests and class identity. Thus the cities aggravated the social problem and, by aggravating it, helped solve it; they were the disease and the remedy. "The great cities have transformed the disease of the social body, which appears in chronic form in the country, into an acute one, and so made manifest its real nature and the means of curing it."

Industrialism had the same dual aspect. It stupefied the worker by limiting him to a single process in the division of labor, enslaved him by the tyrannical discipline of the factory, dehumanized him by reducing him to a machine, a "chattel" to be used and discarded as his employer

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saw fit—but it was also the means of his salvation. The most highly industrialized part of the economy produced the most intelligent and energetic workers who were in the forefront of the labor movement and of the class struggle. Even those workers who were not so intelligent, whose "mental state" was as enfeebled as their physical condition, who were more ignorant than the working classes of Spain and Italy—even they, by sheer force of "necessity," came to know their own interests and to know them to be implacably opposed to the bourgeoisie. Similarly the immigration from Ireland, which had the immediate effect of degrading and barbarizing the English workers, also "deepened the chasm between workers and bourgeoisie, and hastened the approaching crisis."

In each case the disease contained within itself its own antidote. Since the antidote matured only as the disease did, the disease had to run its course before the antidote became effective. As in a grave sickness where the fate of the patient was determined by the final, violent crisis, so the social disease had to await its crisis. The only difference was that the English nation, unlike an individual patient, could not die. "And as the English nation cannot succumb under the final crisis, but must go forth from it, born again, rejuvenated, we can but rejoice over everything which accelerates the course of the disease." (This was later to be known as the "worse is better" principle, the principle that makes reactionaries preferable to reformers—"reformists," as Marxists called them—and, in one famous instance, Nazis preferable to Social Democrats.)

When Engels authorized the translation and publication of *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1887, in the midst of another economic crisis, he believed the book to be as relevant and urgent as ever. The timing of the revolution may have been inexplicably delayed, but the revolution itself was still on the agenda of history. From the perspective of "mature Marxism," Engels's work was a case study of capitalism *in extremis*, the existential confirmation of the scenario outlined in the *Communist Manifesto* and elaborated in *Capital*.

To be sure, there were some deviations, some traces of "German philosophy," which gave it the "stamp of his youth." Engels's own example of that vestigial idealistic philosophy was the passage: "Communism is a question of humanity and not of the workers alone. . . . Communism stands above the strife between bourgeoisie and proletariat." He might also have cited the image of the city as the "dissolution of mankind"; or the portrait of the worker deprived of his "humanity" and "manhood," forced to rebel in order to assert himself as a "human being"; or the Feuerbachian "generic" or "species" man in the preface addressed to the "Working Classes of Great Britain":

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I found you to be more than mere *Englishmen*, members of a single isolated nation, I found you to be *Men*, members of the great and universal family of Mankind, who know their interest and that of all the human race to be the same. And as such, as members of this Family of "One and Indivisible" Mankind, as Human Beings in the most emphatical meaning of the word, as such I, and many others on the Continent, hail your progress in every direction and wish you speedy success.

Apart from these occasional idealistic effusions, as he later thought them, and some unfortunate predictions, Engels had good reason to be pleased with the *Condition*, for it gave every appearance of corroborating the *Manifesto* both in its general thesis and in its details. The pauperization of the English working class appeared here, as in the *Manifesto*, as the necessary precondition for the historical process that would inevitably lead to revolution. And in the *Condition*, again as in the *Manifesto*, material impoverishment was accompanied by a moral degradation that ensured the total alienation of the working class. Although the word "alienation" did not appear in the *Condition* (or for that matter in the *Manifesto*, except to deride the "True Socialists" who still talked of the "alienation of humanity"), it was a thoroughly alienated working class Engels described, a class alienated from "generic" humanity as well as from bourgeois society and culture.

Like the proletariat in the *Manifesto*, which was utterly divorced from bourgeois family relations, national character, law, morality, and religion, the English working class in the *Condition* was a "race wholly apart" in just these respects. "The workers speak other dialects, have other thoughts and ideals, other customs and moral principles, a different religion and other politics than those of the bourgeoisie." In some ways the workers were more humane than the bourgeoisie, friendlier, more generous, less greedy, less bigoted. But it was their less agreeable traits Engels dwelt on at much greater length and in starker detail: drunkenness, brutality, licentiousness, and criminality. To be sure, there was an explanation for each of these. They drank themselves into a state of bestiality and engaged in hideous sexual practices because these were the only pleasures they had. They stole and committed crimes because they were starving and desperate. They were irreligious for the same reason that they were illiterate, because the bourgeoisie totally ignored their education save for the futile attempt to inculcate the incomprehensible dogmas of conventional religion. Their families were destroyed by the factories and by filthy, crowded homes devoid of any domestic comfort. Where the family was not "wholly dissolved," it was "turned upside down," with the wife working and the unemployed husband at home, a situation that "unsexes the man and takes from the woman all womanliness." In addition to the sexual promiscuity among the workers

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themselves, the women were at the mercy of their employers, who enjoyed the traditional privilege of the master over the slave, the *jus primae noctis*—except that the employer could choose to exercise that right at any time.

The working class and the bourgeoisie were thus "two radically dissimilar nations, as unlike as difference of race could make them." They were different as much by will as by circumstance. The rejection by the working class of bourgeois morality and culture was an expression of defiance, a conscious or unconscious act of rebellion. Crime was a form of "social war," a war that the bourgeoisie had been waging against the proletariat and that the proletariat was now turning against their exploiters. Stealing was more than a means of staving off hunger, it was a "primitive form of protest," a denial of the "sacredness of property," an assertion by the worker of "contempt for the existing social order" and of opposition to the "whole conditions of his life." The "surplus population" that roamed the streets, begging, stealing, and murdering, was engaged in the same social war: "He among the 'surplus' who has courage and passion enough openly to resist society, to reply with declared war upon the bourgeoisie to the disguised war which the bourgeoisie wages against him, goes forth to rob, plunder, murder, and burn!" These violations of the law were the evidence of a society "already in a state of visible dissolution," the prelude to that "universal outburst" whose symptoms were ordinary crimes. Atheism was another form of that social war. Echoing Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question" published the previous year, Engels equated religion with the worship of money. "Money is the god of this world; the bourgeois takes the proletarian's money from him and so makes a practical atheist of him." That atheism announced to the world that the proletariat no longer respected the "sacredness and power of the earthly God" and was prepared to "disregard all social order."

If the working class and bourgeoisie were "radically dissimilar," so were the modern working class and the preindustrial workers. Engels's account of the latter recalls the ambiguous passage in the *Manifesto* about the "feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations" that had been "pitilessly torn asunder," leaving nothing but "naked self-interest" and "callous 'cash-payment.' " The *Condition* enlarged upon that idyllic preindustrial state.

> So the workers vegetated throughout a passably comfortable existence, leading a righteous and peaceful life in all piety and probity; and their material position was far better than that of their successors. They did not need to overwork; they did no more than they chose to do, and yet earned what they needed. They had leisure for healthful work in garden or field, work which, in itself, was recreation for them, and they could take part besides in the recreations and games of their

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neighbours, and all these games—bowling, cricket, football, etc., contributed to their physical health and vigour. They were, for the most part, strong, well-built people, in whose physique little or no difference from that of their peasant neighbours was discoverable. Their children grew up in the fresh country air, and, if they could help their parents at work, it was only occasionally; while of eight or twelve hours of work for them there was no question.

Engels continued in this vein, rhapsodizing about those "respectable" workers who had a "stake in the country," who were good husbands and fathers, drank no more than was good for them, mingled happily with the yeomanry, and had a comfortable "patriarchal relation" with their "natural superior," the squire. Their children enjoyed the same natural relationship with their fathers; working at home, and raised in "obedience and the fear of God," they grew up in "idyllic simplicity and intimacy with their playmates." (This moral regimen did not preclude the practice of premarital intercourse, but since it was invariably followed by marriage, that "made everything good.")

The idyll went on for several hundred words before the fatal flaw emerged. Just as in the *Manifesto*, where the "feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations" were shortly exposed as the "idiocy of rural life," so in the *Condition* that comfortable, respectable, patriarchal existence suddenly appeared, in mid-paragraph, to be a life "not worthy of human beings." Spared the violent fluctuations of the industrial cycle, the workers were also spared all mental and political activity. "Comfortable in their silent vegetation," they were intellectually dead, aware only of their petty, private concerns, and ignorant of the "mighty movement which, beyond their horizons, was sweeping through mankind." "In truth, they were not human beings; they were merely toiling machines in the service of the few aristocrats who had guided history down to that time." It was only when the industrial revolution roused them out of that happy life, making them "machines pure and simple," that they were forced to "think and demand a position worthy of men," and thus were drawn into the "whirl of history."

This portrait of the happy, healthy, moral, if mentally torpid preindustrial worker has been criticized by some historians as the familiar myth of the Golden Age, and defended by others on the ground that that age was indeed golden compared with that which followed. The controversy, however important in its own terms, is largely irrelevant to Engels. For here, even more than in the rest of his book, he was concerned not so much with the actual condition of the preindustrial workers as with their role in his historical schema; and in that schema these workers had no role. If Engels's account of them seems mythical and unhistorical, it is because they themselves were unhistorical, which is to say, prehistorical—prehistorical from the perspective of the revolu-

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tion that would bring them on the stage of history and make them the leading actors in history, the agents of the "dissolution" of society and the "transformation" of mankind.

It is no accident that the *Condition* was one of the first occasions when the phrase "industrial revolution" was used, not once but repeatedly, and with the full force of a revolutionary event. The industrial revolution was for Engels the decisive "historical moment," the beginning of the expansion and concentration of the means of production which led to contradictions and crises. It was also then that the working class started its descent into pauperism and degradation which left it no choice but to rebel. The preindustrial workers, by contrast, were not "ripe for revolution" because the economy was not ripe for revolution. Spared the misery that was a precondition of revolution, they were healthy, happy, and comfortable; spared the self-consciousness that would have made them rebellious, they were apathetic and torpid. They had precisely the qualities required of them in a drama in which their only role was to exist and survive. Like a nation without a history, they were happy—and boring.

In the preface to the German edition of his book, Engels explained that a "knowledge of proletarian conditions" was necessary to provide a "solid ground for socialist theories," and that only in England did these conditions exist "in their classical form and in their perfection." *The Condition of the Working Class in England* was meant to give that solid, empirical "ground" for Marxist theory. All the essential ingredients were there: the preindustrial workers in a comfortable, unconscious, unrevolutionary state; the modern proletariat pauperized and degraded, reduced to a "slavery" worse than the serfdom of old, totally alienated from bourgeois morality and culture; the "lower middle class" impoverished and forced down into the ranks of the proletariat; society divided into two irreconcilable classes; the bourgeoisie, the "ruling class," exercising the "power of the State"; the increasing concentration of industry, wealth, property, and population; the increasing intensity of economic crises, misery, and "social war"; and finally the "violent revolution, which cannot fail to take place." Although no one of these propositions was novel in England at the time, the totality was. And it was the totality that added up to an ideology significantly different from the prevalent modes of English radicalism and significantly similar to that of the *Communist Manifesto.*

A distinctive and crucial part of this ideology was its vocabulary—"proletariat" most notably. The word was not invented by Marx or Engels. Derived from the Latin *proles* (offspring), it originally referred to the lowest class of Roman citizen who served the state only by

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producing children. In one variation or another (as an adjective, or in the French form of *prolétaires*), it was used in England from at least the seventeenth century to describe either the ancient populace or the contemporary "rabble." In its modern meaning, applied to the working classes as a whole, it began to appear in Germany in the mid-1830s and was popularized in 1840 by Pierre Joseph Proudhon's *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* and in 1842 by Lorenz von Stein's *Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs.* (Unlike Proudhon, Stein was a conservative who was as wary of the proletariat as of socialism or communism.) By the time Engels wrote the *Condition*, "proletariat" was part of the vocabulary of French and German Socialists—but not of English radicals.

Engels himself was fully aware of the alien connotation of "proletariat." The original preface to the *Condition*, written in English and intended for distribution to members of parliament and English literary men, was couched in the familiar English vocabulary. It was entitled "To the Working Classes of Great Britain," its salutation read "Working Men!" and the text itself referred to "working men." The German preface, however, which followed the English one, started by speaking of the condition of the "working class," went on in the next sentence to "proletarian conditions," and in the following paragraph to the "English proletariat"—all on the first page—and concluded with some comments on terminology.

> I have used the word *Mittelklasse* all along in the sense of the English word *middle-class* (or *middle-classes*, as is said almost always). . . . Similarly, I have continually used the expressions working men (*Arbeiter*) and proletarians, working class, propertyless class and proletariat as equivalents.

The opening words of the book established the significance of the term. "The history of the proletariat in England," Engels explained, dated from the second half of the eighteenth century with the invention of the steam engine and textile machinery. These inventions gave rise to an "industrial revolution, a revolution which altered the whole civil society." England was the "classic soil" of this revolution and, therefore, "the classic land of its chief product also, the proletariat." The preindustrial worker, the handweaver working at home, had been "no proletarian." With the appearance of the spinning jenny, the class of farm weavers merged with the new class of weavers who lived entirely upon wages, had no property, and so became "working men, proletarians." At the same time, the propertyless, wage-earning agricultural laborers became an "agricultural proletariat." The proletariat was fully developed only in England because only there were both industry and agriculture transformed by the industrial revolution. "The industrial

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revolution is of the same importance for England as the political revolution for France, and the philosophical revolution for Germany." It was decisive for the development of the economy and even more for the development of the proletariat. "The mightiest result of this industrial transformation is the English proletariat."

Engels prided himself on the fact that his was the first book to deal with "*all* the workers." And so it did, all workers being subsumed under the category of the proletariat. The "industrial proletariat," the "mining proletariat," and the "agricultural proletariat" shared the crucial characteristic of being propertyless. By the same token, the propertied classes—the middle class and landed aristocracy—belonged to the single class of the "bourgeoisie": "In speaking of the bourgeoisie I include the so-called aristocracy."

This condition of propertylessness proletarianized the workers and then, by the logic of capitalist development, pauperized them. Contemporaries (and historians) might object that not all workers were impoverished, that the navvy or artisan was in a far better state than the agricultural laborer, and the factory worker better off than the handloom weaver. Engels recognized these differences but regarded them as ultimately inconsequential. If some workers were not actually, currently impoverished, they were so essentially and potentially. They were a single class characterized by a single condition; the propertylessness that defined them as the proletariat pauperized them and revolutionized them. That single "class" and "condition" were reflected in the singular title. It was probably out of deference to English usage that Engels chose to call his book *The Condition of the Working Class* rather than *The Condition of the Proletariat*. But he could not have adopted the more familiar "working classes," "poor," or "people" without doing violence to his thesis.

The idea of poverty that emerged from the book was implicit in the word "proletariat." It was total, unrelieved poverty, a poverty that extended itself to every realm of life—cultural, moral, and intellectual as much as material—a poverty that created a class so different as to constitute a different "race." The poverty of the proletariat was quantitatively different from the poverty of the old poor: the preindustrial poor were less impoverished, less hardworking, less miserable. And it was qualitatively different, creating a new consciousness, a new identity, and a new historical role. This is what impressed Lenin when he read the *Condition:* "Engels was the *first* to say that the proletariat is *not only* a suffering class; that it is, in fact, the disgraceful economic condition of the proletariat that drives it irresistibly forward and compels it to fight for its ultimate emancipation. And the fighting proletariat *will help itself*."

Engels was not, in fact, the first to say that. Stein had made it the

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crucial difference between the "proletariat" and the "poor." There had always been poor, he said. What was new, and dangerous, was the proletariat: "dangerous in respect of its numbers and its often tested courage; dangerous in respect of its consciousness of unity; dangerous in respect of its feeling that only through revolution can its aims be reached, its plans accomplished." This dangerousness, which made the proletariat so perilous to Stein, was a source of pride and hope to the Young Hegelians. When they distinguished between the proletariat and the poor, it was precisely the size and courage of the new class, its unity, self-consciousness, and above all, revolutionary character that made it superior to the old poor, that made it a historical class endowed with the highest historical mission.

In his "Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," published early in 1844, Marx described the proletariat (in a passage now regarded as the classic expression of Feuerbachian "humanism") as "a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering." Less well known but equally notable was the next paragraph in which the "artificially *impoverished*" proletariat was contrasted to the "*naturally arising* poor"; the latter, impoverished by nature and natural circumstances, would be gradually absorbed into the larger class that was impoverished by the artificial institution of private property. In *The Holy Family*, the following year, the proletariat retained some of that generic, humanistic character—"the abstraction of all humanity"—while acquiring a more historical, deterministic character, for it was driven to revolt against the inhuman conditions of its life by "absolutely imperative *need*—the practical expression of necessity," the necessity to abolish private property in order to "abolish" itself. "It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment *regards* as its aim. It is a question of what the *proletariat* is, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do." By 1847 Marx was attacking Proudhon, who had been one of the first to popularize the idea of the proletariat as well as the idea of property as "theft," for not appreciating the revolutionary nature of poverty, for seeing "in poverty nothing but poverty, without seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow the old society." At the same time Engels, in the credo he drew up for the Communist League (parts of which were incorporated in the *Communist Manifesto*), explained the difference between the old poor and the new proletariat.

Poor folk and working classes have always existed. The working classes have also for the most part been poor. But such poor, such workers as are living under

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conditions indicated above, hence proletarians, have not always existed, any more than free and unbridled competition has always existed.

It was this new idea of poverty that pervaded the *Condition*—a poverty qualitatively different from the old, just as the proletariat was qualitatively different from the poor. In his commentary on Engels's book, Steven Marcus has suggested a psychoanalytic distinction between "poor," on the one hand, and "working class" or "proletariat," on the other. Inspired by Erik Erikson's observation that young Gandhi's interest in "the poor" rather than in "labor" was a symptom of what Gandhi himself had called his "mother complex," Marcus applied this distinction to Engels.

> As a boy, he [Engels] had often given his little savings to "the poor." As a young man, he has now decided in more ways than one actively to throw his lot in with labor, with the working class or proletariat. The difference between an identification with "the poor" and an identification with the "working class" represents, among many other things, the measure in which an idealistic and rebellious young man could appreciate for himself a traditional historical masculine identity and maintain that identity even in the role of insurrection against the world in which it was grounded.

Whatever credibility one assigns to this feminine-masculine dichotomy, it is interesting that "poor" should be taken to connote an attitude of passivity or acquiescence, and "working class" or "proletariat" an attitude of rebelliousness. This much, at least, is consistent with the Marxist interpretation.

What was unique about the *Condition*, distinguishing it from everything else Marx and Engels wrote at this time or later, was the fact that here the proletariat was something more than a historical abstraction, a logical category subsumed under a larger historical schema, a "world-historical" class furthering the "world-historical" movement of communism. Instead of the usual abstract, universal proletariat, Engels described a specifically English proletariat, located in real towns and villages, living in real cottages and cellars, working at real jobs, participating in real events, suffering real hardships, and indulging in real vices. All this was attested to by real newspapers, books, parliamentary reports, and personal observations. Contemporaries may not have known Engels's proletariat under that name and might have disputed his descriptions, generalizations, and predictions. But they would have recognized the names of the towns and villages, the views of back streets and houses, the scenes of riots and demonstrations, the titles of newspapers and royal commissions, the identities of politicians and writers. And they would have responded (as readers still respond) to the emotive force of the book, the dramatic evocation of misery and the powerful

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sense of outrage. Almost twenty years later, rereading the *Condition* in preparation for the writing of *Capital*, Marx confessed to Engels that it made him feel his advancing years.

> How freshly and passionately, with what bold anticipations and no learned and scientific doubts, the thing is still dealt with here! And the very illusion that the result itself will leap into the daylight of history tomorrow or the day after gives the whole thing a warmth and jovial humour—compared to which the later "gray in gray" makes a damned unpleasant contrast.

That passion and boldness, the illusion that his predictions would "leap into the daylight of history tomorrow or the day after," came in no small part from the powerful ideology Engels imposed on the actuality of history. His English proletariat was the "world-historical" proletariat writ small, a miniature version of the universal phenomenon. If the English working classes never carried out Engels's prediction of revolution, it was for the same reason that they resisted the label "proletariat"—resisted in fact the whole of the historical schema that would have made them what Lenin was pleased to call a "fighting proletariat."

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Life with Father, Life with Socrates

VIRGINIA WETHERBEE

MY FATHER WAS OPINIONATED, argumentative, overbearing, irreverent, brilliant, and an optimist. That is, he thought I was amenable, or would be, or should be. But, since I was very like him (without, I regret to say, the brilliance), we frequently ran at each other full tilt, clashing noisily, always with the same result. I was unseated.

Movie magazines were a common casus belli. I loved them. He detested them. At school, I would eat an Eskimo Pie for lunch and save the rest of my food allowance for buying *Photoplay*. Inevitably, he caught me reading it and confiscated it forthwith. I took to hiding it under my mattress and reading in bed under the covers by flashlight. One night, uninvited, he came into my room, took in the situation at a glance, disinterred me, snatched the magazine, and stormed out. I ran after him down the stairs into the living room where, with a furious gesture, he tore the magazine in half and threw the pieces into the fireplace. I stood sadly watching them burn (more Eskimo Pies ahead) and then went back up to my room. A few minutes later, Father strode in again and threw a book onto the bed. "You're not going to read that trash, do you hear me? Read this instead! And to make sure you do," he added menacingly, "I will test you on it next week."

The book was *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*. The ribbon marker had been placed in the *Lysis*.

Had I been prescient, I might have said, echoing Thomas Huxley when Bishop Wilberforce made a grievous error in their debate on Darwin's theory of evolution, "The Lord hath delivered him into my hands." In truth, Father delivered himself. Up until then, I had been defending myself in our arguments with, so to speak, a stick. Father handed me a sword.

It took me awhile to see that. In the meantime, dutifully, I read the *Lysis*.

I was walking straight from the Academy to the Lyceum, by the road which skirts the outside of the walls, and had reached the little gate where is the source

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of the Panops, when I fell in with Hippothales, the son of Hieronymus, Ctessipus the Paeanian, and some more young men, standing together in a group.

Hippothales, seeing me approach, called out, Ha, Socrates, whither and whence?

The young men, among them Lysis, a beautiful young man with whom Hippothales is infatuated, persuade him to join their conversation, which becomes, with Socrates' guidance, a search for the meaning of "friendship." The more they talk, the more elusive the meaning becomes, so that when the party finally breaks up, Socrates comments, "Well . . . we have made ourselves rather ridiculous today, I, an old man, and you children. For our hearers here will carry away the report that though we conceive ourselves to be friends with each other—you see I class myself with you—we have not as yet been able to discover what we mean by a friend."

What did Father expect me to learn from all this?

Not, surely, a lesson on homosexuality in ancient Greece. In testing me on this and subsequent dialogues, he did not mention the subject. And, having never heard of word or deed, neither did I.

Not, surely, an understanding of "friendship." Like the young men, I knew less about it when I finished reading the dialogue than when I started.

Did he think to wean me from *Photoplay?* Not likely. I was addicted. And, ironically, Father had only himself to blame.

My mother had died when I was a year old and my brother was three. Father's family rallied to help him through the first difficult years but, inevitably, all went on about their own lives and he had to depend for our care on housekeepers. None of them stayed long. One, at the end of her first day, was waiting for Father on the front porch, suitcase in hand. Father, perhaps *pour encourager les autres*, began taking my brother and me with him to his office. A young doctor with a growing practice, he had an office on the second floor of a two-story building on Main Street in the center of town. Beneath the office was a small theater, the Garden. Father bought tickets for us, ushered us into seats, and told us to stay there until he came back to get us. At the end of the first showing, the lights would come on and the theater would empty except for my brother and me and the local derelicts from the Mission around the corner. The two of us regularly sat through two shows, sometimes three. Those were halcyon days, for us and for Hollywood: wonderful Westerns (with Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson), before they were ruined by the singing cowboy, and Harold Lloyd comedies. In our Garden of Eden, we sat entranced through a double feature every day plus a serial on Saturdays. To my knowledge, Father censored only one movie, which featured Theda

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Bara, after he found me in the little lobby staring at voluptuous ads for coming attractions.

So, what did I, then an eighth grader whose favorite reading included *Photoplay, The Girl of the Limberlost,* and *Tom Swift,* learn from my penance of Plato?

To be more circumspect. Father never caught me out again.

That love doesn't imply license. The parents of Lysis love him *very* dearly, he concedes, and wish him to be as happy as possible. Nevertheless, far from indulging his every wish, they are keeping a firm grip on him until he is old enough to rule himself.

A little discipline, I suppose. I did not stop reading *Photoplay,* but I obediently read Plato.

Whatever Father had in mind—and I'm not sure even he knew in the heat of the moment—one overriding thing I did learn: Anytus, Meletus, and Lycon were right—Socrates was a dangerous man. In 399 B.C. they accused him of believing in gods of his own invention instead of those sanctioned by the state and of corrupting the minds of the young. Of his heresy, I can't judge. Of his influence on the young, I can: more than two thousand years after Socrates was brought before the Athenian court to answer to these charges, found guilty, sentenced to death and executed, I fell under his spell, for better or worse, for once and for all.

In an age whose sculptors gave the Western world an enduring ideal of physical beauty, Socrates was, by his own admission and the testimony of statues portraying him, ugly. Heavy-faced with bulging eyes, a broad, snub nose whose nostrils spread wide, a large, thick-lipped mouth partly hidden by an untidy beard, balding, a paunchy body carelessly wrapped in a coarse cloak, barefoot—in appearance, a satyr. Perhaps it is just as well. The looks of a Greek god would have confused the issue of his fascination for young men.

Born in Athens in 469 B.C., the son of an artisan-sculptor and a midwife, Socrates grew up in the Golden Age of Pericles that followed the Greeks' successful conclusion of the Persian Wars. During these momentous years, Socrates fought with great courage and stamina as a hoplite (a heavily armed soldier) in the infantry during several important battles—at Potidaea, which began the Peloponnesian War, at Delium, at Amphipolis. He served on the City Council, singularizing himself as the only one of fifty councillors to vote against a politically popular but illegal resolution. When not fulfilling his civic duties, he was, by profession, a stonecutter, by avocation, or mission, so he believed, the gadfly of Athens.

It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly, and all day long I never cease to settle here, there, and everywhere, rousing,

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persuading, reproving every one of you. . . . I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies, nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls, proclaiming as I go, "Wealth does not bring goodness, but goodness brings wealth and every other blessing, both to the individual and to the state."

From the marketplace to the gymnasia, from morning to night, Socrates walked the streets of Athens, arguing with anyone and everyone (men, women, politicians, soldiers, foreigners) about the meaning of justice, friendship, the good life, piety, immortality. Young men in particular gathered eagerly around him to listen, to argue, perchance, to learn.

The *Lysis* illustrates clearly Socrates' unique method of teaching. The boys, guided by him, seek the meaning of "friendship" by question and answer. As usual in these dialogues, they all become, Socrates confesses, "quite dizzied by the entanglement of the subject." That is the way he leaves them, intentionally, for his aim is not to reach a final definition but to awaken their minds, to rouse them to think, question their beliefs, and eliminate their false assumptions, examining themselves in the process, for "the unexamined life is not worth living."

I was quite dizzied myself by Socrates. For awhile, he took over my life. I read everything I could find about him and fifth-century Athens in Father's extensive library (which included that font of information the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

The time came when I interrupted my father, who was pontificating about something, to say, "That's sophistry, Father, and you know it." He was speechless, briefly. Then, he began to laugh, the proverbial laugh of the little boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar. From then on, whenever Father was pleading a shaky case (as Stephen Leacock pointed out, "A half-truth in argument, like a half-brick, carries better"), he would catch my eye and start to laugh.

As, with his help, I plodded my way through the dialogues—with a modest percentage of comprehension—I became aware of Father's joy in our reading. Plato was his bible. I began to think of him as a latter-day Athenian. Like Socrates, he was not a Greek god. Rather short, heavy-bodied (an eighteen-inch collar), he always looked slightly rumpled even in tailor-made suits. His head was large, his nose big, his vision poor, requiring strong glasses, and his hearing worse. He took advantage of his deafness in our arguments. I had to shout, which made subtlety difficult, humor impossible, mistakes humiliating. Eventually, he wore an earphone, and when he thought I was winning, he turned it off.

Like Socrates, he attracted followers. Dynamic, a fascinating conversationalist, with enormous enthusiasms and ever-increasing financial success, he offered excitement (*never* a dull moment), infinite variety,

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and, very important, jobs. With his younger brother, an ear, eye, nose, and throat specialist and a kind, docile man, he had started a small hospital and, after a time, moved his office there. So my brother and I hung around the hospital, which was almost as entertaining as the Garden and far more educational, sometimes deplorably so. Through our small house in the suburbs (and, later, our very large house on the street next to the hospital), there now moved a steady procession of resident boarders who worked at the hospital: relatives, friends, nurses, technicians, cooks, maids. In both neighborhoods, needless to say, the households attracted attention and gossip, which, like philosophy, was part analytical and part speculative.

But Socrates and Father parted company on some basic issues.

Fee for service. Socrates adamantly refused to accept fees for his teaching. Since, in pursuit of his mission day and night, he was too busy to work at his profession, his service to God, he admitted, had reduced him to extreme poverty. (Xanthippe, Socrates' wife, was, by reputation, a shrew. Inasmuch as she was waiting at home with three small sons to feed, while he was happily walking and talking his way around Athens, nagging seems sensible.) Father subscribed to the sentiment Samuel Johnson expressed in his remark, "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money."

The good life. For Socrates, the good life was to be found in the quest for virtue and knowledge. Knowledge produces right conduct; right conduct produces happy, just, useful, good citizens. Father's idea of the good life was thick, juicy steaks, charcoal-broiled rare, a Packard touring car (my brother and I happily claimed the jump seats), trips to Europe, largesse distributed throughout his small, bustling kingdom.

Despite these lapses, Father practiced, to the limit of his patience, the Socratic method of seeking knowledge about a subject by question and answer (preferably someone else's question, his answer), but without the Socratic irony. Even for the sake of taking advantage of an opponent in debate, he couldn't profess ignorance.

Life with Father was one long course in rhetoric. Mealtimes were particularly instructive and noisy. We ate in the first shift in the hospital dining room, and there was no telling who would be eating with us. A relative or two, a local politician, a visiting doctor, a traveling drug salesman, one of Father's boccie partners. (He had had an alley built in the hospital's side yard so he could get in some play between patients.) Once, for months, a mysterious, elderly German refugee from something appeared and ate dinner with us. Father had decided to learn German. Characteristically, he whipped through a grammar book and now needed conversation practice, so the discussions went bewilderingly back and forth between broken English and garbled German.

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In later years, after I had started college and friends of mine, male and female, would come to visit, those dinners became a test of our friendship. One young man, shaken by the experience (he thought we were fighting), never came back. We weren't fighting. We were arguing. About what? Philosophy—an argument without end. Our motto could have been "Philosophia Biou Kubernētēs"—philosophy, the guide of life (or, equally well, like that of McGeorge Bundy's family, "don't talk while I'm interrupting").

As a discipline, philosophy in the Western world began, appropriately, with a question. Not, up until then, the usual "Who made the world?" with, for possible answers, a wide choice of local gods, but "What is the world made of?" asked by Thales of Miletus, a seventh-century B.C. Ionian Greek. For the next two centuries, the nature philosophers—Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Democritus—sought to determine the original "stuff" of the universe. Then, in the fifth century B.C., attention turned away from the heavens to man. "Man is the measure of all things," declared Protagoras, the first to call himself a Sophist. A wise man, later a teacher of wisdom, the Sophist, for a fee, taught the humanities: language, literature, history, grammar, rhetoric. The pejorative sense of the title came when their teaching of rhetoric, the art of persuasion, had developed into a kind of Dale Carnegie course in how to outsmart one's opponents by quibbling.

Unfortunately for him at his trial, Socrates was identified with the Sophists. Like them, he had no interest in natural science. Like them, he taught, but with a different goal—the moral improvement of mankind. He saw himself as a midwife, like his mother, bringing forth "just men."

In pursuit of that goal, Socrates' genius was to ask new questions. What is virtue? courage? friendship? the good life? and why should one pursue it? With the ideas of definition, of value, a whole world of fresh questions opened up.

"The history of systematic thought," Sir Isaiah Berlin explains, "is largely a sustained effort to formulate all the questions that occur to mankind in such a way that the answers to them will fall into one or other of two great baskets: the empirical, i.e. questions whose answers depend, in the end, on the data of observation; and the formal, i.e. questions whose answers depend on pure calculation untrammelled by factual knowledge." Those that do so become part of a recognized science. However, "between the two original baskets, the empirical and the formal, there is at least one intermediate basket, in which all those questions live which cannot easily be fitted into the other two. . . . The only common characteristic which all these questions appear to have is that they cannot be answered either by observation or calculation, either

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by inductive methods or deductive; and, as a crucial corollary of this, that those who ask them are faced with a perplexity from the very beginning—they do not know where to look for the answers. . . . Such questions tend to be called philosophical."

There is a famous scene in Aristophanes' *Clouds*:

At Socrates' school or thinking-house, Strepsiades, a simple, old peasant, and a student are gazing overhead at a figure suspended in a basket.

STREPSIADES: Hallo! Who's that? that fellow in the basket?
STUDENT: That's HE.
STREPSIADES: Who's HE?
STUDENT: Socrates.
STREPSIADES: Socrates!
You sir, call out to him as loud as you can.
STUDENT: Call him yourself: I have not leisure now.
STREPSIADES: Socrates! Socrates! Sweet Socrates!
SOCRATES: Mortal! why call'st thou me?
STREPSIADES: O, first of all, please tell me what you are doing.
SOCRATES: I walk on air and contemplate the Sun.
STREPSIADES: O then from a basket you contemn the Gods,
And not from the earth, at any rate.
SOCRATES: Most true.
I could not have searched out celestial matters
Without suspending judgement, and infusing
My subtle spirit with the kindred air.
If from the ground I were to seek these things,
I could not find: so surely doth the earth
Draw to herself the essence of our thought.
The same too is the case with watercress.
STREPSIADES: Hillo! what's that?
Thought draws the essence into watercress?
Come down, sweet Socrates, more near my level,
And teach the lessons which I come to learn.

Aristophanes, the great Athenian playwright, in this brilliant comedy produced in 423 B.C., is holding up Socrates and his notions to ridicule. Twenty-four years later, in Socrates' speech to the jury at his trial, he acknowledges the lasting damage to his reputation from this satirical attack. Aristophanes must surely bear a share of responsibility for the severity of the jury's sentence.

The tragic consequences aside (though not forgotten or forgiven), there is a lovely symbolism in the image of Socrates up in the air in that third great basket of philosophical questions. A full basket, "for," Berlin points out, "no matter how many questions can be so transformed as to be capable of empirical or formal treatment, the number of questions that seem incapable of being so treated does not appear to grow less."

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So, we never ran out of topics for discussion. A word, a phrase, a name—equality, the big bang, Darwin, Rousseau, Mrs. Roosevelt (Father's bete noire)—was enough to set us off.

It would be fair to say that I went off to college with an unusual background for a seventeen-year-old girl. (Mount Holyoke prides itself on its interest in the "uncommon woman," but my experience there suggests they are disconcerted by the real thing.) Life with Father had left me with a questionable attitude toward authority and a disdain for ex cathedra pronouncements, for which my professors did not give high marks. I was too young and intolerant to hide my want of faith. Even if I said nothing, as Father irritably noted, my eyes gave me away. But skepticism, like virtue, has its own reward. At that time, on college campuses, communism was intellectually fashionable, and some students, cutting conscience to fit fashion, joined the Communist party or became fellow travelers (to their later discomfort). Because of Father and Socrates, I had no trouble resisting Marxist catechism disguised as dialectic.

After graduation, I married a young man whose interest in me had survived dinner with my family. Perhaps he thought distance the better part of valor, for I shortly found myself living in a small town in the Mississippi Delta. I was just twenty-one, having been married on my birthday, old enough at last to drink and vote, away for the first time from home where, by and large, I had proposed and Father disposed. Samuel Johnson had it right: "The transition from the protection of others to our own conduct is a very awful point of human existence."

Well, like the French abbé who, when asked what he had done during the Reign of Terror, replied, "J'ai vécu," I survived. Thanks, I believe now, to Socrates, with a fond wave to Father and *Photoplay*.

Keats has a phrase: "*negative capability*, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts. . . ." Negative capability, it seems to me in retrospect, is the lasting lesson I learned from all those hours of tagging along in my imagination behind the gadfly of ancient Athens—to ask questions and, like Lysis and his friends, to find no certain answers. ("When you know all the answers, you haven't asked all the questions.") To live, that is, in ambiguity.

Chaerephon, a friend and admirer of Socrates, asked the oracle at Delphi, "Is there anyone wiser than Socrates?" The priestess, medium for the message from Apollo, replied, "No one." Baffled by the god's answer, Socrates set out to check the truth of it by examining men with great reputations for wisdom. He came away from the interviews at last understanding Apollo's meaning: the wisest man is he who knows his own ignorance.

One thing I did know: this issue had no limits of time or place. In

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399 B.C. it had led to Socrates' death sentence. "Socrates is guilty of corrupting the minds of the young and believing in deities of his own invention instead of the gods recognized by the state."

The gods recognized by the state were Homer's Olympians: Zeus, the patriarch; Hera, his wife; Apollo, his son; Athena, his daughter and the protecting deity of Athens; Poseidon and Hades, his brothers; and the extended family. The temples and statuary of the Acropolis in Athens are their enduring monument. But the search of the early Greek philosophers for natural explanations for the existence of things presented a challenge not only to their power but to their existence. "Concerning the gods," wrote Protagoras, "I am not able to know whether they exist or do not exist."

In about 430 B.C., Sophocles took up the challenge in *Oedipus Rex*, a murder mystery with the hero as detective. The origins of the crime are in the past. Laius, king of Thebes, has been told by an oracle that he will be killed by his own son. To prevent this, he has the feet of his newborn son pinned together and the child left to die on Mt. Cithaeron. However, the baby, called Oedipus (the name means "swollen foot"), is rescued, taken to Corinth, and raised as the son of King Polybus. When the oracle tells Oedipus that he will kill his father and marry his mother, he flees from Corinth. On his way to Thebes, at a crossroad, he quarrels with another traveler, an old man, over the right-of-way and in anger kills him (King Laius). Continuing on his way, he meets the celebrated Sphinx, solves her riddle, and receives as his reward the kingdom of Thebes and its queen, Jocasta (his mother), in marriage. As the play opens, plague has struck Thebes. The oracle is consulted and declares that the city is being polluted by the presence of the murderer of the former king, Laius. Oedipus vows to find the murderer.

The chorus, representing the people's point of view, watches the tragedy unfold before them. Seeing the danger in Oedipus's and Jocasta's contempt for the oracles, they appeal to Apollo to make his prophecy come true, lest the gods and religion seem meaningless.

The answer is prompt. The awful truth is revealed: the prophecy *has* been fulfilled. The gods *do* exist. They *do* know the future and man's destiny from which there is no escape. Man *is* subordinate in the universal scheme of things. The lesson displayed for all doubters to see, Oedipus and Jocasta rush offstage to kill themselves. That's that.

Or should be. The play should be over. Jocasta has hanged herself. But Oedipus has chosen not to kill himself. Instead, in his despair, he has gouged out his own eyes. ("No more, no more shall my eyes see the horrors of my life—what I have done, what I have suffered!") The play ends with Oedipus, in the care of his daughter Antigone, wandering off into exile.

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In Oedipus's choice is Sophocles' answer to the challenge of his times—a reconciliation of the traditional beliefs with the new ideas. Oedipus is courageous, intelligent, a good ruler, if hotheaded at times. His only crime is ignorance. The remedy for ignorance is knowledge, and he is free to search for it. Oedipus chooses to do so. But knowledge has its price. When he discovers the truth, too horrible to face, he blinds himself. That, too, is his choice. ("It was my hand, mine, that struck the blow!") And his choice to go on living. ("You would be better dead," the chorus tells him.) The reward for his search for the truth is self-knowledge. He knows now who he is, accepts his place in the universe, and chooses to live with that truth and its consequences.

This is very like what Socrates is saying, day after day, walking the streets of Athens, looking for someone to talk with. "Where do you come from, Phaedrus my friend, and where are you going?" As they stroll into the countryside to find a shady tree to sit under and talk, Phaedrus brings up the new scientific ideas. Socrates has "no time for the business," he says, "and I'll tell you why, my friend. I can't as yet 'know myself' as the inscription at Delphi enjoins; and so long as that ignorance remains, it seems to me ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters." Ignorance is shameful. Knowledge is the greatest good, for if man *knows* what is good, he will *do* it. And through knowledge, man can to some degree influence his destiny.

Sophocles and Socrates were speaking many years apart, however. When *Oedipus Rex* was produced in 430 B.C., one could still say: bliss was it in that Golden Age to be alive, but to be Greek and a citizen of Athens (the world's first democracy) was very heaven! The Sophists' and the rhetoricians' love affair with words had enveloped the city in a golden glow of talk as heady as wine. It was in that glowing freedom that Sophocles (the "quintessential Greek," Edith Hamilton calls him, "direct, lucid, simple, reasonable") chose to probe the awesome relationship between the gods and men.

But the days of glory were running out. The Peloponnesian War had begun in 431, and the Spartan army invaded Attica. In 430, perhaps because of the overcrowding of the city by refugees fleeing to within the protection of the walls, plague broke out in Athens. It would last three years and kill a great number of the population, including Pericles. From then on, the Athenians seem to have been their own worst enemy. The democracy was overthrown and restored. Disastrous campaigns were undertaken and lost. Finally, in 404, not surprisingly, the Spartans were victorious. The democracy was again overthrown and again restored in 403, but the ravages of the plague, the long years of wartime suffering, and the humiliating defeat by Sparta had left the Athenians dispirited, fearful, disillusioned. Belief in the gods and traditional morality was

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waning, especially among young men. As Edith Hamilton says, "No pupil of Socrates could take seriously Homer's gods, still the state religion."

The loss of faith is ominous. "It is, I think, important to realize," Gilbert Murray stresses, "that the normal reason for consulting an oracle was not to ask questions of fact. It was that some emergency had arisen in which men simply wanted to know how they ought to behave." If the gods do not exist, then, as the saying has it, everything is permitted.

This is the atmosphere in which Socrates is walking and talking his way around Athens, fulfilling his God-given mission. And he will continue to do so, he tells the jury at his trial, despite fair warning that, as Anytus declares, "I must be put to death, because if I once escaped, your sons would all immediately become utterly demoralized by putting the teaching of Socrates into practice."

(Xenophon claims that Anytus was angry because his young son, after listening to Socrates, rejected his father's authority and his father's profession, tanner, for which he had been prepared. The boy later turned to wine, Xenophon adds, and "in the end he became worthless to his state, his friends and to himself.")

What *was* Socrates teaching to the sons of Athens? Micheline Sauvage (in *Socrates and the Human Conscience*) says it clearly: "Even in his most trivial discussions, Socrates aims at getting his interlocutor to face himself, so as to substitute a considered, autonomous conduct for an automatic, tacitly accepted conduct which is bound to deteriorate, for it is the fate of traditions and habits to be lost, of beliefs to be shaken, of obediences to be refused, sooner or later."

The transition from the protection of others—fathers, gods, and oracles—is a very awful point of human existence. Socrates' mission as midwife is to deliver men from the protective womb of the gods into a world where self-reliance, self-government, and goodness will bring every blessing to the individual and the state. In those declining years of the Athenian city-state, the gods themselves—exhorting suppliants: "Know thyself," "Nothing in excess"—could only hope for safe deliverance.

Knowledge is all, Socrates says over and over. No one pursues evil except through ignorance. If a man *knows* what is good, he will *do* it. But some of Socrates' young followers, notably Critias and Alcibiades, prove the uncertainty principle in human conduct is always with us.

Critias was one of the Thirty Tyrants chosen by the Spartans to rule Athens after the defeat of 404, a rule of terror, it turned out. Critias, according to Xenophon, so resented Socrates' criticism of the injustices of the Thirty that, knowing firsthand Socrates' persuasive powers, he had a law enacted forbidding the teaching of the art of argument. To make

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sure that Socrates understood that the law applied to him, Critias and another of the Thirty summoned him and spelled it out: "You must not hold discussions with the young." Socrates was lucky. Before democracy was restored the following year, many citizens—fifteen hundred or more—were put to death.

Alcibiades, perhaps Socrates' favorite pupil, was from the same wealthy family as Pericles. He was a golden youth, charming, witty, handsome, brilliant, and thoroughly spoiled and irresponsible. Everything in excess, gifts and vices, describes him. But he did know himself. Staggering in, drunk and uninvited, to a dinner party where Socrates is one of the guests, he is persuaded to give a eulogy of Socrates. In his rambling, drunken speech, he confesses, "And there's one thing I've never felt with anybody else—not the kind of thing you'd expect to find in me, either—and that is a sense of shame. Socrates is the only man in the world that can make me feel ashamed. Because there's no getting away from it, I know I ought to do the things he tells me to, and yet the moment I'm out of his sight I don't care what I do to keep in with the mob. So I dash off like a runaway slave, and keep out of his way as long as I can, and then next time I meet him I remember all that I had to admit the time before, and naturally I feel ashamed. There are times when I'd honestly be glad to hear that he was dead, and yet I know that if he did die, I'd be more upset than ever—so I ask you, what is a man to do?" Shame was not enough. All that bright promise ended in treason, banishment, and an early, violent death.

The jury trying Socrates ("cleaners, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, farmers, merchants") would have been thinking of Critias, Alcibiades, Anytus's son . . .

Socrates' speech in his own defense is prickly and unsatisfactory. He dismisses the charges against him of disbelief in the gods as "pure flippancy" and of his corrupting the young by pointing to many of his followers (including Plato) and their families present in the courtroom who, if he had been giving them bad advice all this time should then "be coming forward to denounce and punish me." He identifies correctly the basis of the charges—hostility toward him built up over many years by distortion of his ideas by so many people, "it is impossible for me even to know and tell you their names, unless one of them happens to be a playwright." He avoids any mention of the real issue involved in his teaching: the bill of rights of the autonomous individual includes the freedom to make mistakes, the freedom to fail. Socrates' trial, by a nice irony, illustrates the danger of his teaching. A man should not make emotional appeals to the jury, Socrates tells them, parading before them his parents and relatives and sons. Instead, "he ought to inform them of the facts and convince them by argument . . . where jus-

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tice lies." He lost that argument as he had with Critias and Alcibiades.

To add insult to injury, Socrates suggests that since he has done nothing wrong, he does not deserve punishment but, indeed, a reward. "Well, what is appropriate for a poor man who is a public benefactor and who requires leisure for giving you moral encouragement?" A man who has neglected his family all these years while he is going about the city urging its citizens to think on goodness? Well, " . . . if I am to suggest an appropriate penalty which is strictly in accord with justice, I suggest free maintenance by the state."

Xanthippe would have agreed with that sentence for, unquestionably, the point about Socrates' neglecting his family was well-taken. At the celebrated dinner party that Alcibiades staggered into, the guests spent the evening drinking enormous quantities of wine. Other revelers arrived to join the party; some left; others fell asleep until only Agathon, the host, Aristophanes (the playwright), and Socrates were still awake, still drinking, and Socrates, still arguing. "The gist of it was that Socrates was forcing them to admit that the same man might be capable of writing both comedy and tragedy—that the tragic poet might be comedian as well. But as he clinched the argument, which the other two were scarcely in a state to follow, they began to nod, and first Aristophanes fell off to sleep and then Agathon, as day was breaking. Whereupon Socrates tucked them up comfortably and went away. . . . And after calling at the Lyceum for a bath, he spent the rest of the day as usual, and then, toward evening, made his way home to rest."

Perhaps this was the evening the hard-pressed Xanthippe met him at the door complaining that their eldest son, Lamprocles, had been disrespectful to her. Xenophon recounts Socrates' little examination with Lamprocles of "filial duty." There is none of this "Certainly, Socrates, certainly," after each point in the dialogues. Lamprocles argues right back, defending himself stoutly when his father lists all his mother has done for him, "But even if she has done all this and much more than this, no one could stand her bad temper." The argument, I think it fair to say, ends in a draw.

It has the ring of truth, a familiar ring. I remember similar little examinations. My husband's mother was intensely competitive. She would have made a fine gambler, had her religious scruples permitted it—cool, skillful, and *lucky*. In the small Mississippi town in which she lived, her talents were narrowly confined, but whatever she did (playing bridge was one outlet), she always won. It was exasperating, especially to her grandchildren when she played their favorite card game, slapjack, with them. No matter how hard she tried (and how many times I suggested it), she could not bring herself to lose. Games invariably ended in tears, tantrums, and harsh words. My

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elenchus on grandfilial duty was no more persuasive than Socrates'.

Ved Mehta tells of a wonderful encounter with Bertrand Russell, who said, "When I was an undergraduate, there were many boys cleverer than I, but I surpassed them, because, while they were *dégagé*, I had passion and fed on controversy. I still thrive on opposition. My grandmother was a woman of caustic and biting wit. When she was eighty-three, she became kind and gentle. I had never found her so reasonable. She noticed the change in herself, and, reading the handwriting on the wall, she said to me, 'Bertie, I'll soon be dead.' And she soon was."

If I had been a gentle, obedient daughter, Father would not have caught me with *Photoplay* and, in reprisal, thrown *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* at me. Of course, Socrates was waiting for me all along in Father's library and I might have found him on my own. I did meet him in college, fleetingly, in a philosophy course. But I would not have come upon him so young. And Father did have some reason for optimism because, while I was not amenable, I was malleable, and who better to mold the long, long thoughts of youth than one of the greatest teachers who ever lived?

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Response to a Letter from France

STEPHEN DUNN

We're living in a Socialist paradise.
My mind boggles when I think where
you live.

All the trees are in bloom
though the gypsy moths, with their plague
mentality, are blossoming too.
Don't feel sorry for us. We've even learned
to live amid Republicans; the avarice
of gypsy moths is only a little more
mindless, effective. It's okay here.
The ocean isn't perfectly clean
but on good days when I get low enough
the waves push me out ahead of them;
lacking wings or an engine
it's the closest thing to flight.
In France, where life and theory
touch now and then,
I don't doubt your pleasures. But here
there's room enough for incorrect
behavior, which some of us plan on.
There are casinos and fifty or sixty miles

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of pines to get lost in.
Socialism makes good sense, sure.
But we actually have four people
who love us, the tennis courts aren't
crowded, our neighbor who has no politics
was generous yesterday for other reasons.
At another time I would offer you
what falls short of promise, the America
outside of me and my part in it.
But not when you feel sorry for us.
I just killed a brown recluse spider.
The sun is out. I want you to know
the afternoon is ablaze with ordinary people,
smiling, full of hidden unfulfillment,
everywhere, my friend, everywhere.

STEPHEN DUNN teaches English at Stockton State College. His most recent collection of poems is *Work and Love*. This poem will appear in his forthcoming book *The Festivals After Dark* to be published by Carnegie Mellon University Press next spring.

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Stravinsky-Craft, Inc.

JOAN PEYSER

In a centenary article, entitled "My Life With Stravinsky," published in the June 10, 1982, issue of the *New York Review of Books*, Robert Craft wrote: "I dread to contemplate the prurient hypotheses and tendentious projections of music historians concerning the nature of the glue that held us together."

Craft's concern is understandable in light of the hostility he provoked from those who knew the circumstances of his arrival in the Stravinsky household in 1949. The situation was this: Stravinsky's first wife, Catherine, the mother of his four children, had been dead for ten years. Soon after her death the composer married Vera de Bosset, with whom he had been having an open liaison for almost twenty years. In 1940, at the time of the marriage, the Stravinskys settled in Los Angeles and, after the end of World War II, invited the composer's second son, Soulima, to join them in the United States.

Soulima Stravinsky, then living in Paris with his wife and young son, was the only one of Stravinsky's children to have pursued a career in music. In the 1930s, along with his father, he played the Stravinsky *Concerto for Two Solo Pianos* on tours in Europe and South America. They even made a recording of that particular work. Soulima also performed the solo piano part in performances of his father's *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments* and the *Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra* under the direction of Stravinsky and several other conductors as well. In June 1948 Soulima and his family accepted the invitation to make a new life in California and took up residence in a small cottage rented and furnished by the Stravinskys about two miles from the composer's own house.

In little more than a year, Craft, who first met the composer and his wife in March 1948, began spending time in the Soulima Stravinsky house. He was there in the summer of 1949 and, again, in October and November of that year when the young family was in Santa Barbara. Then, in 1950, when, according to Vera, she herself helped procure a teaching position for Soulima at the University of Illinois, the Soulima Stravinskys moved out and Robert Craft moved in.

From that moment on, Craft's displacement of Soulima in Stravinsky's life has led many writers to impugn the motives behind most of Craft's actions. Here is one such example: In a review of the thirty-one-record set issued by CBS under the title of *Igor Stravinsky: The Recorded Legacy*, which appeared in the October 1982 issue of the *New Criterion*, Samuel Lipman, a concert pianist and critic of the contemporary repertoire, suggests that the reason the early recording of the *Concerto for Two Pianos* by Stravinsky and Soulima was left out of the CBS set can be traced to Craft's influence. But Lipman is almost certainly wrong about this. Craft insists he had nothing to do with this project, which was produced by Vera Zorina Lieberson. In fact, soon after the records appeared on the market, Craft sent me a copy of a letter he wrote to CBS attacking that omission, among others.

So Craft is correct in fearing that mistakes will be made. Still, many conclusions based on the presumed involvement will be correct. My own view is that, however eccentric and even repugnant many of the details of this Stravinsky-Craft relationship were, Craft's effect on Stravinsky was positive and that future historians will be generous to him.

At the outset I think it important for me to state my own relationship with the principal figures. I never knew Stravinsky. I did know

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the late Vera Stravinsky and conversed privately with her a number of times. I know Soulima and his wife, Françoise. I also know Robert Craft, and *The Musical Quarterly*, of which I am the editor, has published several of his essays.

With the information I have at hand, I view Craft not merely as companion and chronicler, but rather as an influential force, as important to Stravinsky in the nineteen years from 1948 to 1967, the year of his last sketches, as Diaghilev had been in the composer's career during the nineteen years from 1909 to 1928. Those who prefer the earlier works to the serial pieces of the late years are probably reacting as much to the evolution of music in general as they are to Stravinsky in particular. For, as this century moved on, being "interesting" displaced other attributes, such as beauty, expressivity, and profundity, as the ultimate musical criterion. And who can deny that Stravinsky's late works are among the most interesting not only of his career but also of the musical literature of the twentieth century?

It has been argued that everyone is replaceable. In his essay in the *New York Review of Books*, Craft wrote: "From the first, Mrs. Stravinsky believed that I, or someone like me, was essential to her husband if he were to remain in the midstream of new music. She sensed, as she had done in the early twenties, when she introduced Arthur Lourié to Stravinsky, that he needed a musical confidante and sounding board."

Lourié, ten years younger than Stravinsky and a fellow alumnus from the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, first met Stravinsky in Paris in 1925 and served him as "musical confidante and sounding board" for roughly a decade. In 1935 he was replaced by Alexis Kall, an old friend of Stravinsky from St. Petersburg who assisted Stravinsky both during the frequent trips he made to the United States and after he moved here in 1939. When making arrangements to deliver the Norton Lectures at Harvard, *The Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, Stravinsky wrote to ask that Kall be put up with him at Eliot House. When the request was denied, Stravinsky wrote again, this time noting that Kall's presence "was important to me for psychological and moral reasons," that Kall had already given up his own work "to share my solitude and look after me throughout my stay in America."

Stravinsky accepted with ease the idea and the fact of others making sacrifices for him. Lourié and Kall were only two soldiers in a veritable army of devoted acolytes. In the January 1983 issue of the *London Review of Books*, the musicologist and psychoanalyst Hans Keller wrote that "Stravinsky treated human beings as mere, sheer material." Two Californians, Sol Babitz and Ingolf Dahl, were among that "mere, sheer material."

But it is also important to note that Stravinsky did not use others only to perform musical chores. He often used them as ghostwriters for his prose. Vera Stravinsky told me that her husband did not publicly acknowledge the work of these others because he did not want to share the glory with them and, more important, because he wanted to keep all the royalties for himself. Walter Nouvel wrote *The Autobiography*; Roland-Manuel and Pierre Souvchinsky *The Poetics of Music*. Robert Craft recently submitted to *The Musical Quarterly* fifteen hundred words that he claims are the only words that Stravinsky contributed to those six hours of Norton Lectures. Craft's own involvement with Stravinsky was more encompassing than that of anyone else, for he worked on both musical and literary projects and, in addition, immediately became the necessary "musical confidante and sounding board."

Just as Stravinsky had predecessors for Robert Craft, so Craft had at least one for the role Stravinsky played in his life: the bandmaster at the military academy he attended as a boy. Growing up in Kingston, New York, with an older and a younger sister, Craft's early life seems to have been unremarkable. His father inherited a supermarket business, then went into real estate with a partner. He was a Republican, a Methodist, and liked to dance. Craft's mother, the dominant figure in the family, was literary, Episcopalian, and, along with her husband, supported her son in his ambitions. One neighbor remembers the boy as "thinking and complicated," another as "unnecessarily verbose." By his adolescence Robert was fanatic about music. He played the trumpet and spent hours each day conducting to records as he read the scores. He was unaffected by the social distinctions or political conservatism of small-town life. Craft

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was early drawn to Jewish women. He was an impassioned liberal. His open-mindedness was to have resonance with Stravinsky in later years.

In 1937 Craft entered the New York Military Academy at Cornwall on a music scholarship. A former classmate, now on the school's board of trustees, remembers Craft as somewhat less than an average student, excelling only in music. He also remembers him as a follower, not a leader. "What I remember most," the man recalled recently, "was his wholehearted dedication to the bandmaster. He tried to learn everything he could from him. In return he helped him enormously. He checked the scores, copied the parts, made the arrangements, even carried the music. He spent virtually all his free time with him."

Of the New York Military Academy, the same man remarked: "There was a particularly high-class clientele at the school. The sons of the heads of Paramount and MGM went there. The son of Bill Tilden, the tennis player, went there. Celebrities were always hanging around. Fifteen or twenty planes came in every weekend for the tennis matches. Rolls-Royces were everywhere. The music scholarship Bob received must have been viewed by his parents as the opportunity of his life."

The scholarship also provided Craft with four years of glamorous living that he—not expecting to inherit money, not being endowed with leadership qualities, not excelling in traditional academic pursuits—must have feared he could never acquire on his own. He seems to have decided, on some level, that the good life once removed was better than none at all; for, in 1941, when he entered Juilliard at seventeen, he told at least two classmates that his goal was to become an amanuensis to a great composer. Over the years Craft wrote to several European composers including Schoenberg, but it was only when he wrote to Stravinsky that the complex chemistry of the two correspondents meshed in practical, psychological, even philosophical ways.

Craft was probably one of the first Americans Stravinsky met after moving to the United States who viewed art in much the same manner as he did. For his early American years were radically different from those he had known in Europe. Living in Los Angeles, Stravinsky was at first surrounded by Russians—friends, gardeners, cooks, and so on. Russian was the principal language in the Stravinsky household. Professionally Stravinsky became involved with a kind of West Coast Tin Pan Alley. Possibly unaware that music in America could be anything *but* pop, he produced a cabaret piece, the 1940 *Tango*; reharmonized *The Star-Spangled Banner*; fulfilled commissions for Paul Whiteman and Benny Goodman; wrote *The Ebony Concerto* for Woody Herman; conducted a rehearsal of the Army Air Force Band; provided a polka for elephants in the Barnum and Bailey Circus; and composed music for Hollywood films, which was turned down. During this time Stravinsky's music was performed infrequently.

The day on which Stravinsky met Craft was also the day the composer was handed his first libretto in English. Aldous Huxley, Stravinsky's Los Angeles neighbor, had introduced the composer to W. H. Auden. Stravinsky's having to deal with an English libretto—even if there had been nothing else at stake—made Craft immediately useful to him. Auden was to deliver the libretto to Stravinsky in a Washington, D.C., hotel room on March 31, 1948. In a conversation three years ago, Vera Stravinsky recalled some of the events that had led to that first meeting between her husband and Robert Craft:

> "I remember when the first letter from Bob arrived. Stravinsky came into the room and said, 'I received a letter. It is from a young man. It is marvelously written. And so true. He is young but he knows everything.'
>
> "They continued to write," Mrs. Stravinsky went on, "for a number of years. Then, when Stravinsky was going to be in Washington, he wrote to Bob asking him to meet him there. In the hotel room Auden said: 'There is a young man who wants to see Stravinsky.' Well, of course, there were always young men who wanted to see Stravinsky. Who was it this time? Robert Craft.
>
> "When Auden and Stravinsky talked, Bob mostly listened. Then he moved to the side and asked me what I read. Then he told me what I *should* read."

And so did Craft begin to select and to order for the Stravinsky library.

Craft went even further. Although Mrs. Stravinsky had painted a little in her native Russia, after 1920 she had been using her very

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real talent to design items that could be found in boutiques. Hand-painted scarves were her specialty. But, in 1952, Craft persuaded her to set up a studio for herself in a small house in which he himself had taken an apartment only one block from the Stravinsky ménage. Thus Mrs. Stravinsky found an outlet that not only gave her a sense of her own identity—not easy to come by when one is the wife of Stravinsky—but she also occupied herself during those hours everyday when Stravinsky needed to be alone to compose.

Igor, Vera, Robert—each of the three had everything to gain, nothing to lose in this new arrangement. Stravinsky, who in those days surely determined his own arrangements, profited more than the other two. From the beginning, Craft proved useful in finding the errors in Stravinsky's scores. Then, as conductor of the Chamber Art Society, from 1947 to 1950, Craft conducted Stravinsky's music when New Yorkers had no other access to it.

How did Craft influence Stravinsky, the man?

When he first learned of my explorations of these matters, Craft sent me two letters. The first, handwritten, included these observations:

1) Stravinsky and Politics: can anyone imagine that he would ever have returned to Russia in 1962 if I had not been there?
2) Would Stravinsky have written *Abraham and Isaac* without my presence for fifteen years? What became of the "traditional Russian anti-Semitism" found in the family and other correspondence in the 1920s and '30s (and found, too, surprisingly in Prokofiev)?
3) Why did Stravinsky *stop* attending the Russian Orthodox Church after 1951 and for the rest of his life? Did my "free-thinking" have any connection, any influence on his reading?

As to the depth of Stravinsky's receptivity, Craft has commented frequently over the years on that particular element of the master's temperament. Soulima's wife, Françoise, not generally in accord with Craft's views, has emphasized that same personal characteristic to me. "Father was extremely impressionable," she said. "Sometimes he would come home and say 'Renoir is finished' or some such thing if he had heard it from one of Vera's friends."

As for the crucial subject of Craft's influence on the music itself, here I quote from several typewritten letters Craft sent to me in August 1982:

What requires immediate and categorical refutation . . . is the notion that when I met Stravinsky he was already acquainted with the works and methods of the New Viennese School. In fact he did not know a single measure of the music of any member of this group, and the last time that he had heard a piece by Schoenberg—the *Septet-Suite*—in Venice, in 1937, he admitted in print to having understood nothing in it. He had *never* heard music by Berg and scarcely knew Webern's name. . . .

My guilt is not in having directed or controlled the "spiritual interests of a composer of genius" [this is in reference to an attack on Craft by Mikhail Druskin in a book on Stravinsky published by Oxford University Press in 1980] but rather in trying to bury my tracks for having done so. I destroyed several pages of notes (verbal) that I had prepared for Stravinsky when he was composing *The Flood*—one of them mentions the film music in *Lulu* as a model (in construction) for the storm scene—and which he pasted at the center of his sketch-score.

To borrow Harold Bloom's phrase, "the anxiety of influence" (but not in his sense of the Oedipal child's "resented dependence on the progenitor"), I did not want the responsibility of influencing Stravinsky. Having assumed since my twelfth year that he *had* to know more about every aspect of music than I could ever *learn*, I was dumbfounded during our first sessions at the piano together, when he asked for my opinion about doubling a note in a chord, choosing between two alternatives in a modulation, the advisability of repeating a certain figure, and so forth. Here was the man whom I had believed to be completely sure of himself seeking confirmation in the very crucible of his creation. Naturally I tried to give the answers I felt he wanted, and not react instinctively. But what I wanted most was simply to disappear. . . .

In 1949, with the ascendancy of the Webern cult . . . Stravinsky, for the first time in his life, suffered from a fear that his music was being superseded. Most of *The Rake's Progress* was yet to be written and the crisis was slow in coming. One afternoon in March 1952, during a drive to Palmdale in the Mojave Desert, he sat silently, then choked up, suddenly said he was afraid that he could no longer compose. And for a moment or two he wept. I tried to encourage him by proposing that he orchestrate his *Concertino* using, in addition to the obligato violin and cello, wind instruments em-

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ployed in the *Octet* and *Mass*. . . . He started work on the *Concertino* arrangement immediately, but did not compose new music until after a concert tour in Europe. There he watched the Parisian public rave over *Wozzeck* and hiss and boo Cocteau in *Oedipus Rex*, though the real target was not Cocteau but the piece itself and its aesthetics as I think Stravinsky understood. Three weeks later, in Brussels, he heard Paul Collaer discuss Berg and Webern with me after which Collaer sent him a tape of *Das Augenlicht*. In October and November, in Hollywood, I conducted four Schoenberg memorial concerts. Stravinsky, scores in hand, did not miss a rehearsal, some of which even took place in his own home. The remainder of the story, part of it, at least, goes from private to public record.

Stravinsky confirms Craft's influence on his late music. On page 1 of the *Monumentum* manuscript he wrote: "To Bob, who forced me to do it and I did it." Craft quotes this in his *New York Review* essay and adds that the "statement might have been inscribed on *The Flood* and the *Canticles* as well and that could serve as an *apologia pro vita mea*."

If Stravinsky's serial period can be traced directly to the influence of Craft—as Craft claims in these passages—so can Stravinsky's neoclassic period be traced directly to Diaghilev. In fact, the composer might well have inscribed on page 1 of the *Pulcinella* manuscript: "To Serge, who forced me to do it and I did it." For in 1920 Diaghilev handed the composer several eighteenth century manuscripts, then thought to be by Pergolesi, and told him to string them together, adding, of course, his own harmonies. In making this recommendation, Diaghilev pointed to a rich and varied source of material—the art of the past as opposed to the folk material from Russia—with which Stravinsky was to work for the next thirty years. His last neoclassic work, the Mozart-influenced *Rake's Progress*, was conceived just before he met Craft.

Craft's influence on history's perception of Stravinsky is probably the most difficult arena to assess in any account of the Craft-Stravinsky connection. But here again Craft has performed remarkable services. He has illuminated the details of Stravinsky's past, particularly his relations with men and women who, in some instances, were unknown and, in others, were distorted in such outright diplomatic tracts as the *Autobiography*. Stravinsky appears to have held onto everything, and Craft has been tireless in sorting out and organizing the material.

The greatest difficulty comes when we approach the writings presented to us as "by" Stravinsky in his last decades. How can Craft tell us that, in the late 1930s, Stravinsky wrote only fifteen hundred words of the thirty-thousand-word *Poetics of Music* without ever acknowledging his collaborators publicly, and then expect his readers to believe that Stravinsky's post–1954 prose was written entirely by the composer himself? This is particularly hard to accept in light of the style of these writings. Those who had firsthand knowledge of Stravinsky knew the composer to be fiercely intelligent, capable of identifying a problem right away, witty and pungent in his expression, and always free of pretention. They also knew he was no intellectual in the sense in which he has been presented to us in these late writings. Although the ideas that relate to music and aesthetics are most probably Stravinsky's own, the articles and books published under his name in the late 1950s and 1960s use the jargon of modern psychology, physics, mathematics, and musicology in a way that is as alien to Stravinsky's own character and temperament as it is congenial to the interests and personal style of Craft himself.

The portraits Craft has offered of Stravinsky have become increasingly harsh. In the *New York Review* article, Craft writes that Stravinsky was "extremely anal, exhibitionistic, narcissistic, hypochondriacal, compulsive and deeply superstitious. He was also quarrelsome and vindictive, which is stated not as moral judgment but merely as description of behavior." Such words, in fact, represent a quantitative rather than a qualitative difference in Craft's treatment of Stravinsky when the composer was alive. In the same article Craft writes:

> Stravinsky discovered that I was more independent than he had initially supposed, and markedly unlike his children and the numerous acolytes schooled by Nadia Boulanger. Yet I think that after the initial shock, he welcomed this difference in me. No one before seems ever to have contradicted him, or questioned a patently foolish statement (of which he was as capable as anyone else.) No doubt my bad manners were to blame when I talked back, as

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much as the feeling that disagreements should not always be swallowed. But we did adjust to each other.

They did more than adjust. Craft appears to have sensed that an irreverent, abrasive attitude was the only attitude that would nourish Stravinsky, for even in his strongest years, the composer was never influenced by anyone who was *not* in a combative relationship with him. Like an oyster he needed an irritant to produce a pearl. That was his history. His mother was the prototype of those who insulted him. She did not hear *Le Sacre du Printemps* until its twenty-fifth anniversary performance and then told friends she did not expect to like it, that it was not her kind of music. Rimsky-Korsakov, Diaghilev, and Arnold Schoenberg all treated Stravinsky with very real abuse. And Stravinsky's feelings toward each were infused with intense ambivalence. Not only did he take from these people their most seminal ideas, but then, resenting their power over him, he retaliated in the most striking way. According to Craft, Stravinsky repeatedly said he wrote *Le Sacre du Printemps* to send everyone connected to his past to hell. Making great art *is* the final triumph, and Stravinsky, again, in his late years, continued to send everyone in his recent past to hell. Craft was certainly high on that list, not only because of the composer's genuine dependence on him, but also because of Craft's persistent humiliation of Stravinsky in front of servants and musicians as well. And the music kept flowing from Stravinsky like wine.

It is reasonable to suppose that if we were to look closely at the lives of many artists we would find hidden collaborators lurking everywhere. While few have been as willful or as aberrant as Craft, few have been as skillful with words or as intellectually lively as he is. Early in life Craft knew precisely what he wanted to do. He chose the right man who also chose him. And the right woman, Vera Stravinsky, made the connection work.

From 1920 to 1939 Stravinsky had lived in a triangle with his first wife, Catherine, and Vera. Catherine's death left Stravinsky and Vera alone, and it is just possible that this simple twosome seemed empty and inadequate to them both. With Craft's entrance into the household, turmoil returned, jealousies abounded, life became exciting, and Stravinsky turned his back on pop art to create the exalted works of his late years.

Over that period Robert Craft's personality changed. In Stravinsky's life he went from amanuensis to alter ego. He remained a figure always powerfully in the shadows, yet never permitting himself to be quite invisible. The "thinking and complicated" adolescent remained, but in addition, there were mixed with him bits of Machiavelli, Svengali, and John Alden. Craft conducted Stravinsky's life from his own carefully constructed score.

As Stravinsky became weaker with advancing age, Craft became stronger, more manipulative. As Stravinsky's will to create lessened, Craft, through sheer determination and single-mindedness of purpose, revived him with regular and powerful transfusions of empathetic energy. Few men could set out to walk a high wire without a net and do it so brilliantly and for so long as Craft. Whatever fault we may find in his ways, whatever extraordinary behavior took place, here is one set of circumstances in which the end clearly seems to have justified the means.

For, none of us would wish Stravinsky's career had stopped with the neoclassic *Rake's Progress*. Nor would we want a last picture of the composer to be that of a man in despair, weeping in the Mojave desert, fearing years of creative paralysis. Craft was only twenty-five years old when he joined Stravinsky in Los Angeles. Intuitively he did what had to be done so that the composer could make art throughout the rest of his life, and he succeeded, brilliantly.

For much memorable music, we are in debt to Robert Craft.

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Anti-Meetings

OTTO FRIEDRICH

Sir Max

"I laid my hand irresolutely against the gate of the trim front-garden, I withdrew my hand, I went away," Sir Max Beerbohm once wrote, long ago, of his approach to a musty little house in the London suburb of Putney. "Out here were all the aspects of common modern life. In there was Swinburne. A butcher-boy went by, whistling. He was not going to see Swinburne. He could afford to whistle."

The young Beerbohm's trepidations at the prospect of meeting the septuagenarian poet were mild compared to mine at meeting the author of *Zuleika Dobson*. Beerbohm had at least been formally invited to Swinburne's house, whereas I had simply steeled myself and then telephoned from a beachfront hotel in Rapallo. A puzzled Italian servant went to fetch Lady Beerbohm, once an American actress named Florence Kahn. She asked politely whether I came recommended by anyone she knew, and I had to confess that I did not, but she was too courteous to refuse me. "I must go and tell my husband that there is a very nice young man and his I-am-sure-very-nice young wife who would like to come for a visit," she said in slow and careful tones. "I'm sure he will be delighted to see you."

There was a long wait while she inquired about Sir Max's delight, and then she returned to the telephone to ask if I would like to come to tea the next afternoon. I would indeed. The only question then was how to find the Villa Chiara. Lady Beerbohm was vague. "I don't know," she said, "whether—perhaps you will think it improper of me to ask—you are what we used, in the past, to call 'carriage folk. . . .'" There seemed to be no alternative, so I hired a sleepy coachman, who said he knew the way, to drive his decrepit horse along the steep and winding coast road from Rapallo toward Genoa.

Lady Beerbohm, who welcomed us graciously on the sunny terrace of the villa, turned out to be a rather frail and withered lady with a deeply furrowed face. (She was to die the following year, in 1951.) Sir Max, of course, was absent. It is essential, he had once written, in his essay "A Point to be Remembered by Very Eminent Men," that a nervous young visitor be kept waiting for a few minutes before the very eminent man makes his entrance. "Let him be framed for an instant or so in the doorway—time for his eyes to produce their peculiar effect."

Sir Max's appearance was worthy of the delay. A small, slender, pink-skinned man of seventy-eight, he was dressed for the Riviera springtime almost entirely in black, a black suit, a black tie fastened with a pearl stickpin, a black bowler, a black cane. His mustache was snow-white. And his eyes produced their peculiar effect. They were large and slightly protruding and of bright, pale blue.

No sooner had Lady Beerbohm introduced us and announced tea than Sir Max wandered off to look for a chair. We all stood in silence for a moment. From outside came a sudden roar of traffic on the coast road. "You must all sit down again," said Lady Beerbohm. "People have died of old age waiting for my husband to appear when he wanders away."

Sir Max reappeared with his chair and set it down so that the setting sun shone over his shoulder and into our faces. Then he got up again and invited me to follow him to a little pavilion that he used as a library and study. There were several Beardsley drawings on the walls and several of Sir Max's own carica-

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tures. He took from the shelves and showed me some of his books, inscribed first editions of Henry James, Hardy, Wilde, Meredith. I smiled politely. I was too ignorant to realize that several of the inscriptions were his elaborately forged parodies. Sir Max gravely returned the books to the shelves, and we rejoined the ladies.

They had retreated from the sun-swept terrace to the living room, where my wife was admiring a convex mirror that Sir Max had kept with him all his life. His father had bought it at the Paris Exhibition of 1867. "There is no poetry in a straight mirror—just a reproduction of life," he once told S. N. Behrman, who later wrote his biography. "But what one sees in a convex mirror is a complete picture, a composition, an *intérieur*. By miniaturizing, it concentrates and essentializes. It hung in my nursery, this mirror."

"My husband never has tea," Lady Beerbohm said as she poured. "Just a glass of wine." Sir Max sipped silently at some vermouth. Lady Beerbohm passed a plate of damp watercress sandwiches.

I asked Sir Max about Henry James. Perhaps I had been reminded of him by the books in Beerbohm's study, or perhaps I was simply seizing whatever subject might arouse him from his silence. "I admired some of his novels," said Sir Max, "but the later ones were quite meaningless, don't you know." I remembered then Beerbohm's devastating parody, *The Mote in the Middle Distance* ("It was with a sense of a, for him, very memorable something that he peered now into the immediate future, and tried, not without compunction, to take that period up where he had, prospectively, left it.") "Every once in a while, he says something," Sir Max tartly continued, "and then there are great open spaces of ten or fifteen pages when it's all meaningless—just words."

"Of course, my husband is exaggerating," said Lady Beerbohm. "No one was a greater admirer of Mr. James's work than my husband. It is only that he has certain objections. . ."

"Meaningless," Sir Max repeated, then lapsed again into silence. There was a long pause.

"How long has it been since . . ." Lady Beerbohm asked pleasantly.

From the window, a new roar of traffic drowned out the end of her question, but she simply repeated it: "How long has it been since you left America?"

"Just a few months," I said.

"Ah," said Lady Beerbohm. There was another long pause.

"Is everyone in America still reading Conrad?" Sir Max inquired. The question was puzzling, but it seemed to emerge from some earlier encounter or discussion at which I had not been present. "I can't understand," Sir Max went on, "why people in America don't read Trollope."

"Oh, they do," I said reassuringly. "I have a friend who has been repeatedly urging *Barchester Towers* on me."

"All they want is Conrad," Sir Max insisted.

"Oh, Max!" his wife protested. "Mr. —uh— Friedrich says people are beginning to read Trollope after all."

"My publishers seem to think the Americans' need for Conrad is unlimited," Sir Max went on. "Even in the countryside, I understand that the farmer returns from his fields in the evening and hangs up his pitchfork behind the door and settles down with yet another volume of the works of the Polish gentleman."

"Oh, Max!" Lady Beerbohm repeated. "What will Mr. —uh—Friedrich think?"

"My wife is American, you know," Sir Max observed, then settled back and sipped peacefully from his glass of vermouth.

"Don't you think . . ." Lady Beerbohm began. From the window, another burst of highway noise silenced her. Sir Max smiled serenely and reached for one of the watercress sandwiches.

II

Santayana Among the Nuns

"I see no one," said George Santayana, basking like a well-fed cat in the Roman sunshine that streamed through the window onto his bed. "I almost never leave my room. I like it better that way."

The venerable Spanish skeptic, who had illuminated Harvard's philosophy department at the turn of the century—Felix Frankfurter was among his young pupils, and T. S. Eliot and Walter Lippmann—was now living in the

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convent of the Blue Nuns, not far from the Colosseum. He remembered the late war as a distant nuisance that ended with the arrival of some GIs bringing books for him to autograph. He was eighty-six when I went to visit him in the spring of 1950, a small, bent man with waxen, brownish skin and a curling white mustache. He was nearly deaf and nearly blind. He liked to sit up in bed in his blue and white striped pajamas, with each hand tucked into the opposite sleeve, and to talk in a soft, dreamy voice.

And to write, a little bit every morning, "and in the afternoon, too, if I'm feeling well." After about two dozen books of ideas, poetry, criticism, reminiscence, he was finally attempting, in a small, square longhand, his first study of politics, *Dominations and Powers*. After finishing each chapter, he would sew the pages together in the upper left-hand corner with some needle and thread. That way, he explained, he would never need paper clips and nothing could be lost. He worked with a little sewing kit of baby blue that had been given to him by the nuns. "The nuns pray for my soul," he said with a benign smile, "but I tell them I don't want them to. I'm not interested in saving my soul or in other people saving their souls. I tell them that I don't want to go to heaven, and that I'm not afraid of going to the other place."

Santayana happily reported that his editor at Scribner's had described the chapters finished so far as "pure poetry," but he added somewhat less happily that he had not been commended for "sound thinking." As he spoke about *Dominations and Powers*, it sounded characteristic of an octogenarian philosopher who had spent more than a decade in a convent. After criticizing the newly founded United Nations, and President Roosevelt's gullibility in permitting a Soviet veto—"because, of course, *he* didn't know anything about such things"—Santayana declared that the only answer was "a world government." This world government would deal with "the physical sphere" of commerce and law enforcement and such things, the philosopher said, but it would leave to the member states all questions of "religion, education, and private property." And it would not, he insisted, "try to save people, try to make people good, try to do what's best for them when they don't want it—that's all rot!" I asked him how he thought the nations of the world could be persuaded to surrender their sovereignty to his world government. "Oh, they can't," Santayana blithely answered. "This isn't a prediction. I don't think it will ever come about."

One of the nuns suddenly appeared at the door, came and plumped up Santayana's pillow, asked if he wanted some tea, and then departed again. Santayana complained of what he called a catarrh and said he doubted that he would survive another winter, but he professed complete equanimity about the prospects. "I've never been happier in my life," he said. That struck him as too emphatic. He preferred to quote one of the mistresses of Louis XIV: "I am not happy, but I am content."

III

Lotte Lenya

I realized almost immediately that the woman must be Lotte Lenya. She looked just like her, the same square face, the same bangs, the same odd attractiveness. She spoke English naturally but with a mild German accent. She had what I imagined to be the Lenya manner, regal and yet at ease among strangers. And besides, it was the natural place to meet Lotte Lenya—on the white speedboat that sliced through the lagoon behind Venice on its run from Harry's New York Bar to lunch at the beautiful Locanda Cipriani on the island of Torcello.

We were sitting near each other on the stern of the speedboat and offering random remarks about the sun on the water and the prospect of seeing once again the ancient church on Torcello and the stone seat that was said to be the throne of Attila. She spoke French to a younger woman who was with her and English when she addressed some remark in the general direction of my wife and me, and when I spoke to my wife I was also speaking to her. We were, in a vague way, flirting, or perhaps I was simply trying to impress her, and she knew it.

Did she assume that I recognized her and that that was the reason for my interest, or was she simply accustomed to having everyone interested in her? But I had been an admirer for many years, long before even her revival of

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The Threepenny Opera, back to the 1940s when I had seen her in a long-forgotten musical about Leonardo, *The Firebrand of Florence.* That throaty off-key voice singing "Pirate Jenny" is one of the sounds that remains permanently in my mind—"Pirate Jenny" and the crane duet from *Mahagonny* and the Burma tango: *Ja, das Meer ist blau, so blau. . . .*

It was all very well to suppose that she knew I knew who she was, but one would talk to Lenya *as* Lenya rather differently from the way one would talk to an attractive older woman encountered on a speedboat to Torcello, wouldn't one? For that, I must then force myself—mustn't I?—to ask, "Aren't you Lotte Lenya?" What a stupid question! How utterly inane to ask someone who is famous throughout the world whether he is really himself. Pardon me, but are you really Charlie Chaplin? Could anything be more surely guaranteed to ruin a conversation? And just when it was beginning to become friendly? Are you really Jacqueline Kennedy? Are you Charles de Gaulle? Greta Garbo?

But this is the counsel of cowardice. Cowardice is always discreet, tactful, in good taste. If I could someday look back to an occasion when I had actually been riding on a speedboat from Venice to Torcello with Lotte Lenya, would I not want to kick myself for having been too timid to make her acquaintance?

"Excuse me for asking," I heard myself say as the speedboat began slowing for its docking at Torcello, "but aren't you Lotte Lenya?"

"Good God, I'm not *that* old," she answered.

"Sorry," I said, beginning to look fixedly out across the lagoon.

The younger woman helped her off the speedboat, and we all went to Cipriani's, where we took seats on opposite sides of the restaurant.

IV

Waiting for Dr. Schweitzer

Two oaken doors gave access to the small, cluttered room in which Dr. Albert Schweitzer received petitioners. Outside each door sat an assembly of hopeful applicants. "Look, just look in there," said Dr. Schweitzer's niece, a middle-aged lady named Frau Woytt. She irritably threw open a door to exhibit a collection of earnest visitors, some arguing excitedly, others sitting patiently in corners. "They have all been waiting patiently for hours," she said. "Two publishers, translators, teachers—it will take hours more before they are done."

On the other side of the hall was another room filled with less important visitors.

"Here you can meet Frau Hausknecht," said Frau Woytt. "Frau Hausknecht was for many years with Professor Schweitzer in Lambaréné. She is telling about her experiences in the jungles. You must wait for a little while."

With these words, she swung the door inward, banging it into the back of Frau Hausknecht's chair and disrupting her reminiscences of the jungle. The stout, gray-haired woman turned around, smiled benignly, and then continued her recital.

"The jungles are not as thick as many people think, although they are thicker than our forests," said Frau Hausknecht. "There are many trees about forty meters high. And many animals and birds. Monkeys. Giraffes. Lions. Elephants. Pelicans. All sorts of animals."

"What do you eat?" asked a woman with a wide, floppy hat. "Food is one of our greatest problems," said Frau Hausknecht. She spoke with weary patience, as though she had already said the same things many times before. "Because of the heat, we cannot keep perishable foods such as meat and milk for more than a few hours. Most of our food must be shipped from Europe and America. Even potatoes."

"Even potatoes!" exclaimed the woman with the floppy hat. "That must make them frightfully expensive." She seemed to be the main interrogator. The others—eight women and three men—sat silently in what was evidently the dining room. Next to Frau Hausknecht stood an enormous grandfather clock with wooden hands, opposite her, a life-size wooden cupid protruded in mid-flight from the wall.

"Yes," said Frau Hausknecht wearily. "Very expensive."

"How much would that be?" pursued the woman with the hat. She seemed genuinely interested. For a minute or two, there was a

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lot of whispered computation. Finally, one of the other women quoted a price. Frau Hausknecht merely repeated, "Yes, very expensive."

"Frightful," said the woman with the hat. "*Furchtbar.*"

"But after all," replied Frau Hausknecht, "one can't live one's whole life without any potatoes."

At that moment, the sliding doors next to Frau Hausknecht rolled apart, and there, like an apparition, stood Schweitzer.

"Here comes the lion," he beamed. At seventy-six, Schweitzer seemed tireless. A tall, solidly built man, he was wearing a black, single-breasted suit, cut in the style of about 1900. Across his well-filled vest, he wore a chain. He had a bushy walrus mustache, large eyes with enormous eyebrows, and a rumpled crown of long gray hair. More striking than any physical feature, though, was his presence, a combination of purpose, confidence, and charm. One could sense at once that the famous theologian, organist, doctor, and missionary really was a great man, and that he knew it himself, perhaps almost too well. He gestured to one of the petitioners and then retired behind the sliding doors. A quarter of an hour later, he reappeared. "Now I am the dentist," he said. "Who comes next?"

When Schweitzer had returned to his lair again, Frau Hausknecht continued her recitation. Now it was a story about a monkey that had been left at the hospital because it had disrupted its original owner's household. The petitioners sat nodding.

Outside in the hall, Frau Woytt was disposing of a bespectacled young teacher who had come to get a photograph of Schweitzer autographed. His plan, he said, was to have the autographed picture reproduced so that each pupil who graduated from his class could have a copy as an inspiration. Frau Woytt praised his ideal and edged him toward the door. But at the last minute, the teacher had a new plan. He asked for the name of one of the natives at Lambaréné who might appreciate gifts from his children. A name was offered, various gifts were suggested, and the worthy man left.

"Everyone comes," said Herr Woytt, owner of the house in Frankfurt and reluctant host to the petitioners. "Most of them want something. Some don't want anything. Professor Schweitzer sees them all. This morning a neighbor came, an old woman who lives in that house down the street. She came in her dressing gown and slippers. She said that no doctors could cure her, and she asked Professor Schweitzer if he would examine her. Of course, he saw her for a few minutes and quieted her down." Herr Woytt put his finger to his forehead in the age-old gesture of compassionate contempt.

"Someone else brings his little volume of bad poetry, which he would like Professor Schweitzer to help him publish, because no one else seems to take any interest in it. Professor Schweitzer talks to him about his poetry and says he will do what he can. Someone else has written an important treatise comparing a dozen African dialects with their Indo-European roots. Since, of course, Professor Schweitzer must be able to speak all these languages fluently, will he please read this manuscript immediately and then find a publisher?"

Herr Woytt spoke with a curious mixture of anger, idolatry, and bewilderment. In his description of Schweitzer's tribulations, there was a constant tone of baffled exasperation, directed not only against the people who came to Schweitzer with their troubles but also against Schweitzer for patiently talking with each of them.

By about seven o'clock, the important people in one anteroom had been disposed of, and only a few of the unimportant in the other room still remained. Three of these were apparently schoolteachers, elderly women who giggled and chattered. They had brought wreaths of flowers for Schweitzer. Suddenly one of them cried, "I can see his head! I can see his head!" The door slid open again. Schweitzer gravely accepted the women's wreaths and ushered them inside.

"*You* still have to wait," Schweitzer said to the only remaining petitioner, a plump, red-faced little man in a vest and spats.

"Ja, ja," said the man, tittering.

"I taught him arithmetic," Schweitzer said to Frau Hausknecht.

"Ja, ja."

"Do you still remember any of it?" Schweitzer demanded.

"Ja, ja, I still do arithmetic with great pleasure."

After Schweitzer had returned to his den,

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the plump man turned to Frau Hausknecht and asked her whether she knew anything about Schweitzer's exploits in Africa.

"I have been at Lambaréné for the last twenty-five years," she said proudly.

"Twenty-five years!"

"Twenty-five years."

"But you are so well preserved," the man said in an effort to be courtly. Frau Hausknecht did not answer. Under the harsh overhead lamp, her face looked peaceful.

"Twenty-five years in Africa," the man persisted. "I thought you had been brought up in the—er—safety of Europe." No one answered him. Inside Schweitzer's room, one could hear the high laughter of the three schoolteachers.

"Isn't it a terrible life down there?" the plump man tried again.

"It's not easy," Frau Hausknecht said.

"Yes, terrible," the man said.

Schweitzer finally emerged with the three teachers, bowed farewell, beckoned to the red-faced man and slid the doors behind him. Just a few minutes later, he came out again.

"He wants to go to Heidelberg," Schweitzer said.

Inside, the petitioner could be seen attempting with some difficulty to unfold a large and unwieldy railroad schedule.

"I must find a train to Heidelberg," the man said to himself. "I have already missed three of them. Now when does the next one go?" He spoke in intermittent bursts, without noticing whether anyone was listening. "Number 17 goes at 22:10. That is probably the best, yes, that is probably the best."

Schweitzer told Frau Hausknecht to go and get some supper in a restaurant. He took a white sugar bag out of his coat pocket and doled out a few coins to her. Then he went back into his room and shut the door. Frau Hausknecht continued to sit and wait. In the silence, the petitioner could be heard telling Schweitzer which trains to Heidelberg were the best.

After several minutes ticked off on the grandfather clock, Frau Hausknecht went to the door to evict the visitor and speed him to his train. At the threshold, she turned and said, "You can say that even when he is seventy-six years old, Professor Schweitzer *works* from eight in the morning until eight at night. That is a *man!*"

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The Dead Dolphin

PHILIP MURRAY

And the old Counts of Vienne, where are they?
—Saint Guy Riant

I will not anthropomorphize.
I will not say here's another sport found dead
On the beach in the morning tide.
The surf is not sighing, nor do the waves
Say endlessly good-bye. All the same
A formidable creature has died and lies
Exposed to all the hazards of being unburied.
The eyes have already been picked clean
And are as blind and shadowful as any statue.

A swarm of flies is still busy about his sex,
A feast that will continue some days further.
To the touch he is hefty, leathery;
It would take all my strength
To roll him over who rolled over
So effortlessly in his element recently.
Now he is permanently stranded on the beach,
His broad flat tail-flipper half-anchored in sand,
And no high tide will likely lure him back.

Examining his slightly open snout, elongated,
That grim parabola of jaws double-lined with

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Short white teeth still perfect and intact,
Even if they cannot bite a jellyfish,
That macabre grin retracts our verdict DEAD.
That aspect of him still lives and delivers
An incisive commentary on his hopeless condition,
And on the pitilessness of nature who
Decks us out and ultimately does us in.

It is the smile of the Duc de Guise enlarged
Out of proportion, villainous and ironical,
The lethal comic innocence we are left
When the elements are through with us for good.
This shapely creature whose name is akin to womb
Is telling us the worst about death. It remains
For us to discover for ourselves what is best.
But I have not meant to be sentimental;
My unpicked eyes are dry.

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A French Connection

JOHN WEIGHTMAN

In the spring of 1982, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR published a fascinating little article by Professor Donald Keene, "Journey with Japanese," in which Keene explained the external accidents responsible for his involvement, during most of his adult life, with the Japanese language. What he did not make clear, however, was why he felt so drawn toward foreign languages in the first place—French, and then Chinese, Arabic, and Persian—before he settled down to a permanent marriage with Japanese. The people who speak a foreign language really well have usually learned it through having a parent of that particular nationality, or they have spent at least part of their childhood in the foreign country, or they belong to a relatively small linguistic group, such as the Hungarians or the Dutch, and they need to master a major world language in order to gain direct access to international life. But Professor Keene had no foreign family connections, and his native speech was American English, the most universal linguistic vehicle in the world. Why should he feel the urge, not simply to acquire a useful working knowledge of a foreign tongue, which is the limited ambition of most language learners, but to rebuild his personality, as it were, in Japanese and to function as a quasi-native? This is a relatively rare compulsion. I have known many English and American professors of French, and many French professors of English, but most of them stopped a long way short of having a native command of their second language, either because they thought the feat impossible to achieve or the result not worth the effort. Quite a few, I have occasionally suspected, even felt that there was something unnatural, indecent, not altogether morally sound, in trying to usurp the native speaker's "instinctive" command of the language, and however thorough their knowledge might be, they were content always to remain on the foreigner's side of the linguistic barrier. In this regard, it might be said that Professor Keene has violated a taboo, but so enthusiastically and unconsciously that it does not occur to him to ask himself why.

However, this is a question that has often occurred to me in recent years, because for a long time, I was as obsessed by French as Professor Keene is by Japanese. I am of English parentage and grew up entirely in England. I did not meet a native French speaker until I was eighteen, and I was twenty when I first set foot in France to spend the regulation year there as a student. But when I obtained my first job at twenty-three, it was as an announcer-translator in the newly founded French Service of the BBC, where my colleagues were mostly French people, plus a few English people brought up in France. I remember how astonished I was at the appointment. I had answered the advertisement without hope, simply because I automatically put in for anything connected with French. When, after a week of written exercises, viva voce sessions, and microphone tests (along with a lot of native French speakers), I was called into the personnel office and offered a post, I was so taken aback that I naively asked the official in charge if he was sure there hadn't been some mistake. Although, by this time, I had taken a second degree in France, I was only too aware of the gaps in my knowledge and of the fact that, to all intents and purposes, I was a linguistic fraud. But now, in retrospect, I can only wonder at the intense, and obviously neurotic, concentration that en-

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abled me, in so short a time, to learn to pass myself off as a Frenchman, and which was to sustain me as a public performer in French for so many years. It was only much later that I fully realized the abnormality of my behavior and began to look for explanations.

The main one, no doubt, was that, although English, I had not been brought up to speak English in the ordinary sense. It is hard to remember now how isolated certain parts of Great Britain still were in the early 1920s, when motorcars were a luxury available only to the upper class, buses were only just being introduced into the rural areas, and radio and television were unknown. Working-class people walked or bicycled between one town or village and another, and they rarely traveled far from their place of birth by train, unless forced to do so by war or acute economic necessity. I was brought up in Northumberland, then in a very poor state because of the depression, a half-agricultural, half-coal-mining area, and a curious limbo-like zone, very different from Scotland to the immediate north and the rest of England to the south. A striking feature was the extreme peculiarity of its dialects, especially "Geordie," the language of the eastern part, which had struck Daniel Defoe as a strange phenomenon when he toured Great Britain in the eighteenth century. It still survives today, although in a mitigated form. Yet two or three years ago, I heard a successful young working-class pop singer from Newcastle complain on television that people in other parts of England took him for a foreigner when he tried to engage them in conversation. Only last year, a southern novelist, Paul Bailey, who went as writer-in-residence to Newcastle University, wrote a puzzled little article expressing his surprise at not being able to understand what the people were saying in the streets of the town. "Geordie" was the speech of my father and his family; my mother and her family spoke West Northumbrian, a separate dialect related to Cumbrian, and with a quite different intonation. I alternated between the two parts of the county, and I cannot now recall whether I ever spoke a "pure" version of either dialect. Probably not, and in any case, as must usually happen with unwritten speech, the forms varied considerably, and they were also affected by the attempt to teach us an approximation to standard English in the elementary schools. It was not until the age of eleven, when I went to grammar school, that I regularly heard educated southern English spoken by one or two masters who had graduated from Oxford or Cambridge. At first it seemed an impossible language that I would never learn to get my tongue around and, moreover, embarrassingly artificial and snobbish. It was some time before I understood that the most artificial-sounding speech may seem "instinctive" or "natural" to the person using it. Swearwords, in particular, struck me as being hilariously funny when pronounced in the southern way. Once, as a very small boy, I overheard a local aristocrat scolding his dogs in exquisite southern tones, "Dahown, you buhggahs, dahown!" and the shock made me double up with mirth. (The dialectal style would have been something like: "Doon, yi buuggerrs, doon!") It didn't occur to me that he would have been incapable of pronouncing the words differently. As it happened, I was later to discover that the surprise and the charm could work both ways. A northern working-class contemporary, who kept his accent and eventually had an affair with a very upper-class southern girl, told me that she was quite entranced by the monosyllabic folk term for sexual congress, pronounced with the gruff northern vowel sound: "Oh, do say that lovely word again!"

Since my relationship to standard southern spoken English was comparable to that of Shaw's cockney heroine, Eliza Doolittle, in *Pygmalion*, and since, moreover, I was divided between two different dialects, I suppose it slowly dawned on me that I had to be my own Professor Higgins and treat all language as the arbitrary and accidental result of social and geographical situations. Shaw's play was certainly a great revelation to me when I read it in my late teens. But, in the meantime, I had started to learn French at the grammar school with a very inspiring teacher, a Yorkshireman who spoke the language well (although, as I later realized, not perfectly), and who was also in his idiosyncratic way a genuine intellectual, capable of developing ideas for the sheer pleasure of doing so. With the blind faith of youth, I simply latched onto him and decided that, since French was his subject and went with such a fresh and lively mind, it would also be mine. Or, to be more accurate, I just took this for granted without

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ever formulating it as a conscious act of will.

An additional factor, of course, must have been that, as regards French, I was not handicapped as I was in English by my childhood conditioning but on a footing of equality with all non-French speakers. As a result, my pronunciation has always been better in French than in English, that is, "correct" and neutral, and as close as possible to that of an excellent Parisian radio announcer, whom I listened to as often as possible during my student days and carefully imitated, because I found his voice and manner extremely congenial. In England, I have sometimes been taken for a foreigner or a resident Jewish refugee; this happened to me particularly in the days when I was still working regularly at the microphone in French, perhaps because the whole body is gradually affected by the muscular characteristics of a particular kind of speech. I have a theory that a central part of the anatomy, the diaphragm, does not function in the same way in French and English. In French, it seems to me to pulse quite steadily, because the breath is emitted in an even stream and variations in expression are achieved mainly by timbre, whereas in English, the diaphragm tends to thump more irregularly because of the tonic stress. Whether or not this is true, the fact remains that it is not always easy, after sustained speech in one language, to switch impeccably to the bodily rhythm of another, and it may have been for this reason, plus traces of Northumbrianism, that I sounded dubious. In France, once over the initial hurdles, I have usually passed for French, and at more than one Parisian gathering, people have conversed with me at length under the impression that I was Monsieur X, a fairly well known playwright, whom I apparently resembled quite closely in physique and diction. This was quite gratifying, except for the fact that Monsieur X, strangely enough, was not at all the radiant vision of manly beauty that he ought to have been, and I could derive no vicarious artistic satisfaction from his plays, since they struck me as being rather empty.

Looking back now, I think there may also have been another reason for the displacement of personality I effected so rapidly in late adolescence. My father had died when I was fourteen, after wasting away with tuberculosis for a year and a half. As a young man, he had been an ardent Christian and a preacher in the Wesleyan chapel. Later he became a prominent local Socialist, campaigning with the Labour party on behalf of his fellow miners and, had he not worn himself out, no doubt sooner or later he would have had a good chance of being elected to Parliament. My childhood memories are full of impressions of visits by the famous Labour party worthies of the day, most of them Christian Socialists, and of rousing choruses around the American organ with the help of *The Labour Party Hymnbook*:

> The people's flag is deepest red,
> It shrouded ere our martyred dead . . .
>
> Let cowards flinch and traitors sneer,
> We'll keep the Red Flag flying here.

Had my father lived, I might have been afraid of appearing a coward and a traitor by not following in his footsteps. But I think I knew, even before he died, that I was quite different from him in two respects: I was incapable of any flicker of religious belief, and I was a contemplative rather than an activist. It was easier for me to alter myself than to tackle the surrounding society; it was simpler to move to a wider area by learning a foreign language than to try to cope with the fag end of Christianity in a depressed locality on a remote fringe of English life. I have sometimes thought since that it was, in fact, a cowardly solution and that I have not been half the man my father was, although my adult life has been twice as long as his. Then, again, I reflect that one cannot really go against one's basic temperament. I felt stifled in that warm but limited atmosphere, and I was driven by an overpowering urge to get out, although I was to go back to it again later with the comfortable sense of returning home. Since, through some fluke, I had retained a good deal of the imitative linguistic faculty of childhood into adolescence, language learning was an avenue of escape, and any other modern language might have served my immediate purpose equally well, had it been on offer in the same way. The fact that I specialized in French was a pure accident, but a lucky one.

Of course, escape is a relative concept. I later got to know several French individuals who had learned to speak English more or less fluently and who had settled in England

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in order to avoid the pressures of French bourgeois life. But when I was first in France, all I experienced was a sense of liberation. In the 1930s, the English atmosphere was still heavily conventional and hierarchical, in spite of the efforts of the emancipators, such as Shaw, Wells, and D. H. Lawrence. A great deal of Victorianism still hung in the air, and except within a minority of the militant working class and the enlightened upper classes, it was bad form to discuss ideas for their own sake or to assume that intellectual speculation might be more fun than cricket, football, or "character building." Life at the grammar school had been particularly irksome because of this, since the headmaster, an old-fashioned Cambridge graduate and a hockey "half-blue," if I remember rightly, was a fierce exponent of the doctrine of *mens sana in corpore sano*. It was a great relief to find myself in a country where most adults seemed to pay no attention to games at all, where talking was both a pleasure and a social duty, and the witty development of paradox an everyday conversational gambit. Also, at first contact, France appeared astonishingly egalitarian. It was not top-heavy with a royal family, an elaborate aristocracy, and an immediately identifiable upper middle class. The Revolution, terrible though it no doubt was, had disposed of all that, and even the Napoleonic aberration (I had adopted H. G. Wells's view of Bonaparte as a shoddy adventurer) had at least had the good effect of establishing *la carrière ouverte aux talents* once and for all. Also, French literature was remarkably outspoken about everything from sex to religion; its pessimistic realism and astringent clarity were like a breath of fresh air after the woolliness and sentimentality of so much English writing. In short, I was delighted by practically everything and, during my student years, kept a daily diary in French to fix it all in my mind in the appropriate language.

Naturally, my views have changed a great deal since then, and so, indeed, have the two countries. I have grown old in both, with the feeling that I now understand them less and less in any overall sense. I constantly discover new facets and complexities on either side; and some "truths" of which I was once fairly sure seem to have been transformed into their opposites. To mention a minor issue: the French have now become open-air fiends and great sports enthusiasts and, to my dismay, can be as boringly insistent and as chauvinistic about football and tennis as any Englishman ever was. Fortunately, however, existentialist and absurdist philosophy, as expounded by Sartre and Camus, helped me to understand the metaphysical significance of games. I came to realize that my dumb schoolboy recalcitrance when faced with games masters, cricket stumps, house matches, etc., arose not only from a lack of athletic talent but also from a subconscious, visceral objection to the mindless glorification of the phony absolutes of arbitrary ludic rules. Having grasped this point, I can now watch tennis tournaments on television with a certain interest, and can lend a relatively sympathetic ear to the earnest disquisitions of my football-playing grandsons.

A far more important matter is the great social and political change that has taken place in England. The royal family and the remnants of the aristocracy are still in place, although in a rather different way, but enormous progress has been made toward equality with regard to both class and intersexual relations. In spite of the present conservative reaction, England no longer lags behind France in sexual frankness or intellectual outspokenness, or even perhaps in avant-garde dottiness. Although France, too, has been modernized at a great rate, I occasionally feel, when I go there now, that I am moving back in time to a less equal society rather than forward to a more open system. The entrenched bourgeois elitism to be found even among French left-wing intellectuals has to be weighed against the cultural divide maintained in England by the Labour party's inability or unwillingness, when in power, to eliminate the privately financed schools perpetuating an upper-class ethos. Admittedly, a certain form of elitism is necessary for the running of any country, and I used to think that the French method of recruitment, based on *les grandes écoles*, was self-evidently better than ours. But now I am not so sure. There are advantages in not having things too cut and dried, in allowing anomalies to survive even if they depend on private money, so as to cater to the endless quirks of human nature. But by and large, in spite of continuing differences, England and France are much more alike now than they were fifty years ago. If I

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were obliged to make a general comparative judgment, I would say that the improvements have been much more marked on the English side—simply, perhaps, because there was more room for them here—whereas France, during the last generation or so, seems to have lost some of the solidly humanistic flavor I appreciated so much when I was young.

But I am not capable of making any such judgment with confidence, because I cannot disentangle myself enough from either country to see it fully in perspective. What is clear, however, is that, in the end, I chose to put England first and to go back to English as my primary language. After working daily in French for eleven years, I had the opportunity of settling permanently in Paris, but I did not take it. Instead, I moved over to the English university and began writing in English. Here again, although I have always tried to be a rationalist, I think I acted on a largely unanalyzed hunch. It is true that my private life was English, since I was married to an Englishwoman, but we had met as fellow students of French, and our common liking for France and the French has always been part of the bond between us. Perhaps by this time I had known too many people of various nationalities, bilingual or trilingual through force of circumstance, who were not quite at home in any language, or felt sadly exiled from their original native speech. Perhaps I sensed that the years I had spent reading literary English, before I had had to cope with the spoken form, constituted a grounding I could not fully repeat in French, however hard I tried. Certainly I felt I was becoming increasingly gallicized and that English was receding from me. As a Northumbrian dialect-speaker, I had been a marginal Englishman; now I was becoming a still more dubious one, and there was no possibility of turning myself into an ultimately authentic Frenchman. If this seems like a neurotic exaggeration, which would be more appropriate in the case of some unfortunate individual dithering about a sex change, I can only say that one does not choose the nature or the intensity of one's problems. Because of the circumstances I have described, or because of some inborn characteristic, I have always been acutely aware of the uncertainty of my relationship to language in general at the same time as I have been passionately interested in languages in particular. I know, of course, that Englishness or Frenchness or any other cultural complex related to a given language is not an "essence"; it is an accidental accumulation of habits, which gives an identity to originally anonymous potentialities that might have crystallized differently in a different linguistic setting. But once the habits have been acquired, the personality is bound to function in accordance with them, since a language, when it has been fully assimilated as the emanation of a collective entity, conditions the individual more than the individual can influence it. Anyone who could speak two languages "perfectly," that is with an absolutely native sense, in each language, of the full resonance of each word or expression, would be doomed to schizophrenia—mild or acute according to circumstances—because one cannot easily be two different persons in the same instant. However, in my experience, such absolute bilingualism is extremely rare; usually, one language operates at a much deeper level than the other. Curiously enough, it is even possible for some individuals to manipulate the surface mechanics, as it were, of a language, without developing any serious feeling for its emotional or intellectual constraints. I once had a chance of observing a famous Cambridge professor, fluent in many tongues, and it seemed clear to me that he retained exactly the same English personality in all of them. But my sensibility did not function like that; French had broken into it, and I was often at a loss to know which set of responses—Northumbrian, standard English, or French—to bring into play. In fact, although I have now opted for my own peculiar version of standard English, I am still to some extent in the same situation.

This account is in danger of sounding like the sad story of a splintered identity, but I don't mean it to be negative; I have known more splintered souls who spoke only one language. As I have said, the discovery of French was a great relief to me, and since I took to it so eagerly, I must have been badly in need of it. A whole area of French culture, everything in fact relating to the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment tradition—Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Valéry, Gide, Alain, Sartre, Camus, etc.—has been more important for me than the bulk of English writing. I have

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even found the French Christian apologists—Pascal, Claudel, or Simone Weil—far more useful than any English authors in my attempt to understand the phenomenon of religion and why it should still mean so much to so many people, while remaining a blank impossibility for me. With some more recent, post-Enlightenment trends, such as the willfully vacuous "New Novel," and certain fashionable theories, like the eccentric variations on Marxism, Freudianism, structuralism, deconstructionism, etc., I have been sharply out of sympathy, but I think I see why. To my mind, they represent deviations, distortions, or extremes within the central doctrine of absurdist humanism, which is the true heritage of the Enlightenment, and which has been more fully developed in France than anywhere else. They owe too much to those two false prophets of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment, the Marquis de Sade and Nietzsche, whose poison is already present to some degree in Gide, Sartre, and Camus. I am, of course, using the metaphors "prophets" and "poison" as a sort of rhetorical shorthand. Sade and Nietzsche, like everything else, are an irrefutable part of the "absurd" world; once they occurred, they became an aspect of "necessity"; it is no use supposing that they might never have existed. In fact, they made some important points. But the attempt to integrate them, complacently or excitedly, into modern humanism is surely a monstrous error, and their claim to operate beyond the unavoidable, and purely human, categories of good and evil only serves to demonstrate that there is an absurd way of apprehending the "absurd" world, which is a kind of intellectual self-sacrifice in honor of the absent god—a sort of Abraham complex—or a self-indulgent surrender to absurdist hysteria.

On a lower philosophical level, I am grateful to French for making my life a lot brighter than it might otherwise have been. England, even in its Northumbrian part, is not devoid of humor, but in the best French conversation there is a fizziness, a rapidity, a warm, disillusioned, civilized banter, which, while not totally unknown in certain pockets of English society, is much less widespread here. Now that I have relatively few occasions to speak French, there are days when I suddenly feel French sentences coming into my mind, and I have an itch to change gear, as it were, and to move from the slower speed and greater literalness of English to the lighthearted, quasi-irresponsibility of the Frenchness I prefer. This happens especially if I have just heard some sharp, intelligent exchange on the French radio, or if a French friend comes to see me and a dormant part of my mind is stirred into life, and I find myself saying things that would probably not have occurred to me in English. In fact, when I first began working with purely English colleagues after so many years spent mainly with French people, I noticed that my remarks often seemed out of key, or the person I was speaking to looked nonplussed, and I realized that I was mistakenly trying to carry on a French conversation in English. Since then, I have learned, or relearned, Englishness well enough to pass more or less unnoticed in my present context. But French and Frenchness nourished a good part of me once and for all, and perhaps some of that nourishment comes through even in English.

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A Survival Strategy for Academic Authors

ROBERT DARNTON

You are unpublished, unknown, and have just finished a dissertation on urban politics in the Midwest. Or you made tenure in the 1960s but haven't yet made it into print, although your friends assure you that your manuscript on the structure of metaphor in Jane Austen will be gobbled up by a university press. Or you are a veteran of the lecture hall and want to recast your course on "Byzantium Between East and West" as a book. What do you do? You certainly face difficulties, because hard times in higher education and in publishing have made it harder than ever for academic authors to get their work accepted by university presses.

I can appreciate the degree of difficulty, because I recently completed a four-year term on the editorial board of the Princeton University Press. Having cleaned out my files—not "files" actually, but seven cardboard cartons crammed with readers' reports and minutes of board meetings—I can offer an account of the publishing process to the person it affects most deeply but who knows least about it—namely, the academic author. Princeton follows some procedures that do not exist in other houses, but its experience is fairly typical of the better university presses. So a report on how manuscripts are accepted at Princeton should be of some help to authors dealing with presses everywhere in the world of scholarly publishing.

First, dear author, you should know that the odds are stacked against you. I figure them at nine to one or ten to one, calculating the number of manuscripts submitted against the number accepted. Despite the hard times that have hit academic life—or because of them—the submissions increase almost every year. In fiscal 1972, the first year for which we have figures, the Princeton University Press received 740 manuscripts. In 1981, it received 1,129—an increase of 52 percent. In 1971 it accepted 83 manuscripts. In 1981 it accepted 118—an increase of 42 percent. In retrospect, the pattern seems clear: the pressure from submissions rose steadily throughout the 1970s, shot up in 1976 and 1977, and broke the 1,000 mark in 1980. The Press responded to the flood of manuscripts by increasing the flow of books, so that it now plans to accept about 120 manuscripts a year, financial conditions permitting.

That is a huge job both for the editorial board, which faces tougher decisions at every meeting, and for the editors, who must cope with wave after wave of manuscripts and pass on an increasing number of "nos" to an increasing population of disappointed authors. Seen from the author's point of view, the process looks still tougher. In a given year, your manuscript will be one of about 1,100 considered by the Press, and you hope that it will be one of 120 accepted for publication. To do so, it must clear a series of hurdles. It must catch the eye of an editor, win the favor of two or sometimes three readers, make a preliminary cut at a pre-editorial board meeting, and survive the final selection at a monthly meeting of the editorial board, when four professors will choose a dozen manuscripts from a field of fifteen to nineteen. There is no ironclad quota, but there are always losers—and more of them each year as the competition gets stiffer. So how to win? After going through my cardboard cartons, I have come up with the answer: a surefire

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survival strategy for authors, using six easy strategems.

• Don't submit a book. Submit a series. We at Princeton turn down books by the hundreds, but as far as I know we have never turned down a series, and we took on a half dozen during my four years on the board. Other presses do the same, especially in the natural sciences, where the craze for series is strongest. If you are merely a humanist, you could propose a series on the human condition and then slip in as its first volume your monograph on Jane Austen or urban politics in the Midwest.

• If you must propose a book, make it a book about birds. We never turn down field guides, and we have accepted books about birds from every corner of the earth—Colombia, West Africa, Russia, China, Australia. . . . You can't lose, at least not with Princeton. Other presses find other subjects irresistible. You might try country houses with Yale and cookery with Harvard.

• If you can't come up with a field guide to birds, choose one of the following subjects: bird nests; bird calls; the mating practices of birds; birds and Jane Austen; birds and urban politics in the Midwest; or William Blake; Samuel Beckett (although he may be losing ground to Eugenio Montale); the nobility of almost any French province between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries; a new theory of justice; a translation of anything Japanese, but preferably poetry, which should be "linked" and located at some point in the period between 2000 B.C. and 1960, although any other period will do.

• Tactics. It is not enough to select the right subject. You have to tackle it in the right manner, and the tactics vary according to field. For example:

Politics. The Press reader must be able to say in his report, "This study combines hard digging in empirical data with a significant contribution to theory." I especially recommend the mining industry in Peru and dependency theory, or Bolivian copper and modernization, in a suitably revisionist version.

English. You must prove that you know all about the latest lit-crit theory from Paris and New Haven and that you don't believe in it.

Art History. Keep it esoteric. Thirteenth-century stained glass will do, but it must be from Burgundy, not Paris or Chartres. You can always turn in a catalogue *raisonné* of some collection, although we have about exhausted the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

History. Say it's anthropology.

Anthropology. Say it's history.

History and Anthropology. Use the microcosm-macrocosm device. In history you must be able to see the universe in a grain of sand—say, Springfield, Massachusetts, in the eighteenth century. In anthropology you should be able to construct a symbolic universe from a rite of passage—say, a Javanese funeral.

• Here are some tactical principles to follow, irrespective of field:

Be interdisciplinary. Mix fields; it makes you seem more innovative. You can even mix metaphors to show that you are at the cutting edge of the frontiers of knowledge. Emulate the Princeton faculty wife who remarked to a visiting dignitary at a university reception for members of the Institute for Advanced Study, "It's so nice of you people from the Institute to come here and cross-fertilize us."

Be risky or, rather, appear to be. Say, in effect, "This is a far-out book. I dare you to publish it." And then write something ordinary. When I was on the editorial board, I felt oppressed by creeping monographism, the tendency to write more and more about less and less, to smother subjects in erudition, and to reduce the idea-to-footnote ratio to the vanishing point. So I proposed a risk quota. We were to build risk taking into our regular publishing program by setting aside a half-dozen slots for unorthodox books. I thought we might even allot a risk book or two to each editor, with a minimum of vetoing by the editorial board, so that the editors could enjoy some free rein. As a result, the same kind of monographs continued to come in, but a new argument accompanied them: "It's a risky book; it will draw some criticism, but it will stir things up." This made us all feel better.

Be revisionist. It is always good to overturn some "classic" thesis. But be careful to catch the cycle at the right moment, because a revision of a revision has a way of making you seem to be back at square one.

Be naughty, just a little bit. A manuscript that is not merely risky but also risqué stands a chance of standing out from the other 1,119. This strategem is especially recommended for tables of contents, which in any case are all that most board members will be able to read. A

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recent example: "Sequential Sex Reversal," "Conflict Situations for the Sex Ratio," "Outcrossed Hermaphrodites." We accepted this manuscript for our series on population biology without a blush. It is all about birds and bees, although it contains a section on barnacles too. Before joining the board, I had never considered the sex life of barnacles.

• Choose the right title. Two principles prevail here: alliteration and the colon. The alliteration usually occurs in the main title. It should be short, suggestive, poetic if possible, and so literary that the reader can form only the foggiest idea of the book's contents. Then comes the colon followed by a subtitle telling what the book is about. Some examples, chosen from the lists of "Manuscripts Submitted," which the Press receives almost every week (I must admit that we chose very few of these for publication):

The Pause of the Pendulum: Portugal Between Revolution and Counter-Revolution

Notice the prevalence of *p*'s and the carryover of the alliteration from the main title to the subtitle. It's what I call the Peter Piper Principle. Thus:

Peril, Pestilence, and Perfidy: The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856–1877
Pashas, Pilgrims, and Provincial Groups: Ottoman Rule in Damascus, 1807–1858
The Promise of Punishment: Prisons in Nineteenth-Century France
Pictures and Punishment: Art in the Service of Criminal Prosecution During the Florentine Renaissance

Why this domination of the letter *p*? I don't know, unless Peter Piper invaded the collective subconscious from the nursery. But variations are permitted. You may alliterate in the subtitle:

Women in Agriculture: Peasant Production and Proletarianization in Three Andean Regions

And you may use other letters. *M* is very good; it warms up the reader:

The Mediated Muse: English Translations of Ovid, 1560–1700
Measures and Men: Visual and Verbal Political Satire in Early Georgian England, from Pope to Churchill
Metaphors of Masculinity: Sex and Status in Andalusian Folklore

L can have a lilting, lyrical effect:

Lives, Lovers, and Lyrics: The Biographies of the Troubadours

R is also recommended. It revs up the reader:

Rhetoric, Royce, and Romanticism: The Impact of Idealism on Nineteenth-Century Theories of Discourse

This last title illustrates another imperative: go from the big to the small. A title should operate like a funnel. Suck the reader in by announcing something grand in the main title, then squeeze him through the subtitle into a monograph:

Reform, Repression, and Revolution: Radicalism and Loyalism in the North-West of England, 1789–1803
Class, Conflict, and Control: Culture and Ideology in Two Neighborhoods of Kingston, Jamaica
Personality and Politics: Hidden Patterns in Late Medici Art Patronage
Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU
Land and Labor: Economic Dependency and Social Order in Springfield, Massachusetts, 1636–1703
The Irish Inner Circle: Slatemaking in Daley's Illinois
Neither Sleet, nor Snow, nor Sabbath: The Sunday Mail Controversy, 1810–1830
Fashion and Fetishism: A History of Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body Sculpture in the West

By way of refinement, you can add a "from . . . to" construction. It conveys a sense of direction and seems to be especially effective when alliterated with the letter *c*:

From Concessions to Confrontation: The Politics of the Mahar Community in Maharashtra

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From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution
From Clan to Class: The Relationship of Social Structure to Economic and Demographic Change in São Paulo, Brazil, 1554–1850

Occasionally, but only with the greatest caution, it is permitted to stray from alliteration. But you must have very strong reasons, such as the need to overwhelm the reader by a blast of poetry:

Forked Branches: Unpublished Medieval Translations of Ezra Pound
The Windless Perpetual Morning: Archetypal Primitive Symbolism in the Poetry of Theodore Roethke

The poetic touch naturally goes best with literary subjects:

Strange Chords, Lucent Verdure: Mastery and Madness in John Ruskin

But it may be used in art history:

The Armor of Light: Stained Glass in Western France, 1250–1325

And it will do nicely for any subject that is sufficiently deep:

The Secret of the Black Chrysanthemum: Charles Olson's Use of the Writings of C. G. Jung

Poetic effect also can be achieved by evocative use of the indefinite article:

A Complex Weave: The Writing of Thoreau's "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" with the Text of the First Draft
A Playful Judgment: Satire and Society in Wilhelmine Germany

If you favor the definite article, you had better stick with alliteration:

The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Administration, 1550–1650
The Wanton Warrior: A Study of Elizabethan Dramatic Convention and the Decline of Figural Representation

But a sufficiently vivid image can free you from the need to alliterate. Indeed, it can conjure up an entire civilization, especially if it evokes territory in the eastern hemisphere:

Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities
Bear in the Land of Morning Calm: Soviet Policy Toward Korea, 1964–1968
The Pagoda, the Skull, and the Samurai

The last title provides a rare example of poetry triumphing over the colon. But you should never do without a subtitle unless you are absolutely certain of the power of your poetry; thus:

Trumpets Blown in the Empty Night

I still don't know what that book was about, nor what the subject is of another manuscript without a subtitle that we received recently: *Mostly Chaos*. It seems to have something to do with physics.

A last class of exceptions concerns unorthodox moves, in which you take the reader by surprise instead of captivating him by sounds and images. With the strategem of the all-embracing title, you are bound to get him somewhere and so may drop the alliteration:

Marxism and Domination: A Neo-Hegelian, Feminist, Psychoanalytic Theory of Sexual, Political, and Technological Liberation
Psychoaesthetics, Psychologism, Psychology: A Phenomenological Inquiry into Their Relations

You may even try to tickle the reader's funny bone:

On the Rocks: A Geology of Britain
Loom with a View: Vincent van Gogh "A Son Métier"
La Vie en Prose: Readings of Early French Novels

And finally, you can try to hit him between the eyes:

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The Phallic Imperative: An Analysis and Critique of Masculine Sexual Priorities
Certainty: A Refutation of Skepticism

I should end on that positive note. But in reviewing the strategies available to academic authors, I must confess to some skepticism about certainty of any sort in the publishing business—and to a secret admiration for two professors: the first is a physicist who called his book *Lecture Notes for Astrophysical Sciences 522*, the second a biologist who called his *The Nesting Behavior of Dung Beetles*. Neither, I'm sorry to say, made it into print.

The Business Trip

RIIKKA MELARTIN

In light fever,
in your stockinged feet,
you play on the floor:
warm and sweet and freshly bathed,
nursed with half an aspirin
and imported orange juice.
Tonight I'll wrap you
in your pale-blue quilt,
watching your sleep;
but won't wake you in the morning,
remembering how in the airport lounge
you didn't call out —
but stood, bulky and precarious
in your dark winter clothes,
watching steadily as I
put down my bags to wave good-bye.

RIIKKA MELARTIN's poems have appeared in *Friends' Journal* and *Poetry*. She is a winner of the 1982 Academy of American Poets contest.

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Elegy

(For Marion, for Jane)

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS

I

Death and the maiden

Were you, as old prints have shown,
armor over props of bone,
scythe on shoulder blade asway,
here's a word or two I'd say:

When you met that lady now
—she of the amused cool brow—
which of you with more an air
carried off the occurrence there?
Held—the buoyant head so high—
every fascinated eye?
Stole, as half in mischief too,
scenes *you* strutted front to do?

Which at last, when curtains met,
had us leaning forward yet
in the dark?—to breathe and rise,
odd elation in our eyes.

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II

"one day anyone died I guess"

Here she lies, poor dancing head,
in the world we know of, dead.
Every sense avers: The End.
Yet we're hedging (who'd pretend
our five portholes on the night
gauge the seven oceans right?)
hedging: past a world in stream,
past the learned journal's dream
(quark or quasar, beta ray),
what's that glimmer? limbs at play?
Something there? a curtain stirred?
Laughter, far and teasing, heard?

Where such awesome laws are set,
honey, misbehaving yet?

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS is the editor of *Poetry*. His recent publications include *The Kiss: A Jambalaya*, *Selected Poems*, and *Sappho to Valéry: Poems in Translation*.

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The Most Translatingest Man

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN

THE LETTERS OF EDWARD FITZGERALD. *Edited by Alfred McKinley Terhune and Annabelle Burdick Terhune. Princeton University Press. 4 volumes. $40 each.*

In 1909, the centenary of Edward FitzGerald's birth, scarcely a periodical with any literary pretensions failed to carry a long article on his life or his works, usually complete with illustrations. Few literary magazines are left today, but even so, it is remarkable that in 1983, a century after his death, there has not yet been a single article, so far as I can determine, about the man who was in many respects the most popular poet of the late nineteenth century. For decades no respectable public man could make a speech without quoting from FitzGerald's most famous work, his reworking of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, of which at least 215 editions appeared in the hundred years after its first publication. But perhaps the last time his words had much popular currency was in the title of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* half a century ago. Even in 1933, O'Neill was deliberately invoking a pleasantly faded memory of his own boyhood, of summer afternoons longer than this century could provide, of adolescence untroubled by much beyond the stirrings of sexual awakening, and the half-forgotten words of the title taken from the *Rubáiyát* were meant to recall those golden days long gone.

A decade later Edward FitzGerald's name might be said to have vanished almost completely from popular memory. When I was an undergraduate in the 1940s I took a course in English literature, at the beginning of which the lecturer sought to establish the level of elementary literary knowledge of his audience by setting some fifty brief factual questions. One of them asked for the identity of Edward FitzGerald, and of approximately forty undergraduates aspiring to a degree in literature, only one could answer the question (not, alas, myself). As I recall, there was not so much as a gesture indicating "Of course!" as the answers were read out, for most of the group had probably never heard of the *Rubáiyát*. Chagrin at my own ignorance probably prompted the interest in FitzGerald that I have felt since then.

Perhaps he seems destined to join all those other once-popular writers whose names have become mere ghosts, their corporal reality gone forever. But we may hear a good deal more about FitzGerald than we might have expected ten years ago. If so, his rebirth will surely not be a mere part of the general renewal of interest in the Victorians, nor will it spring from the chief cause of his fame in the nineteenth century, although it would not surprise me to discover a revival of interest in the *Rubáiyát* itself, if not in the other works. The recent appearance of the exemplary edition of his collected letters filled a double function: it made available the bulk of the important materials about his private life, and it confirmed the guess of many readers that he is one of the great epistolary artists of his period, worthy to stand beside Carlyle, Macaulay, or Hopkins, even if his letters are often more parochial than the others. The new

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN, professor emeritus of English at Princeton University, is currently writing a biography of Edward FitzGerald, to be published in 1984 by Faber & Faber and Atheneum Press.

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edition represents nearly a half century of devoted work by the late Professor Alfred McKinley Terhune and his widow and co-editor, Annabelle Burdick Terhune.

Since FitzGerald's death there have been several collections of his letters, most notably those edited by his younger friend, W. Aldis Wright, librarian, fellow, and Vice-Master of Trinity, Cambridge, FitzGerald's old college. There have also been editions of his correspondence with such individual friends as Fanny Kemble, Bernard Barton, Bernard Quaritch, and W. B. Donne. This, however, is the first collection to aim at completeness, and the editors tell us that nearly a quarter of the four thousand letters printed here have never before been published. Inevitably, a few groups of letters have escaped their net, but it is improbable that there will ever again be any considerable new bodies of material discovered. Nearly all the letters in these volumes were written by FitzGerald himself; few of those sent to him have survived, since he scrupulously destroyed most that he received, relaxing his caution only slightly in the case of the letters from his good friends Thackeray, Tennyson, and Carlyle. Even FitzGerald recognized that it would not serve the memory of those great men well if he were to destroy their letters in the hope of keeping their private life from the public.

At first glance it might seem that FitzGerald himself would hardly be pleased at the publication of these letters. After all, he was in some ways an intensely private man, resentful of personal familiarity from anyone whom he did not count a friend, deliberately scornful of conventional behavior, and so anxious to dissociate himself from the stratum of society to which he was born, that he refused all invitations from county society around his home in Woodbridge. He was at particular pains to make sure that no one should know how he spent his considerable inheritance (most of it went to private charity), and he habitually published his works anonymously, refusing to add his name to subsequent editions even when it was moderately well known that he was the author. "As for my Name," he wrote to his publisher, "I always told you it would do both of us more harm than good by appearing on Title page or in Advertisement." Beneath the calm of his usual exterior, we can't help glimpsing a trace of self-loathing in his frequent reiteration of his hatred of his own name, but one suspects that there was also a simple desire to maintain his privacy in his assumption of half-jesting sobriquets with which to sign his letters, such as "The Laird of Littlegrange," referring to his modest house. The names seem a deliberate taking-on of a role that relieved him of the particularity of his own personality, and to that extent protected his privacy.

But there is more to the matter than that. Although he was so scrupulous about destroying most of his friends' letters, it is curious that in nearly twenty-eight hundred pages in this edition, he never once asks, so far as I can tell, that his correspondent burn what he had written himself. Not proof, of course, that he would have expected the publication of his letters, but it does suggest that he might have minded less than we suspect at first, although he might never have admitted so much even to himself.

FitzGerald's attitude toward his own publishing and that of his friends was odd and seems deeply rooted in the complexities of his own life. He came of an inordinately rich family (his mother was reputed to be the wealthiest commoner in England), and though ultimately his inheritance was a good bit less than might be expected for a man brought up in five large country houses, as well as in residences at Seaford and Brighton, and a splendid London house in Portland Place, he was nonetheless independent financially all his life and never had to earn a penny. He also inherited many of his family's social prejudices without being completely aware of them, but he was genuinely modest and essentially democratic in his friendships and, hence, partially embarrassed by his family's wealth. To one friend whom he was afraid of putting off by giving the address of Castle Irwell, his mother's seat near Manchester, he shamefacedly protested that it was, after all, only a small castle and sent a sketch of it to prove his point.

His mother was a fashionable, domineering woman who preferred the glitter of the London season to rural domesticity, and she often left her husband and eight children in one of their country houses while she went to Portland Place or Brighton. She had a surprisingly

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bohemian salon, where she entertained poets, musicians, architects, painters, and even superior actors such as the Kembles, who became close friends. But she was never in any doubt of the distinction between her own position and that of her guests; nor could she have imagined life without the privileges to which she had been born. Try though he did, her son never succeeded in divesting himself of a similar attitude, and to the end of his life he had little real understanding of the problems of writers who had to earn a living by their pen. Literature for FitzGerald was essentially an occupation for gentlemen who could keep themselves free of the marketplace. And gentlemen who wrote without thought of profit had no need to sign their names to what they had written.

Like many other young men fresh from the university, FitzGerald thought he wanted to be a writer but found that he had little to say. As a cultivated man with considerable interest in literature, painting, and music, he fell naturally into artistic circles, particularly those in which his Cambridge friends moved when they had become writers. Chief among them were Thackeray and Tennyson, both of whom he had known at the university, although his friendship with them ripened afterward. Both men squandered their inheritances, both were short of money, and FitzGerald generously contributed to their support. He greatly admired the early works of Thackeray and the 1832 and 1842 *Poems* of Tennyson; then, as the two writers became increasingly successful, his first enthusiasm for their works slackened. Success is always hardest to stomach when it comes to those one has patronized, however unselfishly.

It was harder for him to work up admiration for Thackeray after *Vanity Fair, Pendennis, Esmond,* and *The Newcomes.* "He is become a great man I am told: goes to Holland House, and Devonshire House: and for some reason or other, will not write a word to me. But I am sure this is not because he is asked to Holland House." By the end of Thackeray's life, FitzGerald spoke disparagingly of him as a writer, although he never failed in his old personal affection for him.

FitzGerald had loved many of the early works of Tennyson before he knew him well. In 1832, on a coach trip to London, he "fell a-dozing in the morning, the sights of the pages in crimson and the funerals which the Lady of Shalott saw and wove, floated before me: really, the poem has taken lodging in my poor head." He came finally to prefer the least introspective poems of Tennyson and disliked his later works. He once fell fast asleep when the poet was reading aloud to him an early version of *The Princess,* and with *In Memoriam* his disillusion was complete, so that he spoke of the latter as having the "air of being evolved by a Poetical Machine of the highest order." He continued to profess his admiration for the "old champagne flavour" of Tennyson's early works, but he never again really cared for his poetry, however fond he was of the man. Until his death he teasingly called his friend "the Paltry Poet," probably never realizing either how much it annoyed Tennyson or how much of his own sublimated envy it betrayed.

FitzGerald was the most loving of men, and he did not behave with conscious envy or malice, but it became easier for him to be skeptical of the achievements of his friends than to face up to having reached forty without having accomplished anything of the same quality himself. Yet the disappointment shows through clearly. However much he would have liked telling himself that he could have been as good a novelist as Thackeray or as fine a poet as Tennyson, and as prolific as either had he needed to write and to publish for money, he knew it was not true. To be surpassed by friends whom he was in the habit of subsidizing naturally produced some of the same feelings in himself that his mother would have felt if her bohemian guests had begun to take social precedence over her.

FitzGerald had considerable artistic talent and time to make use of the talent, but he was lazy and knew in his heart that he had been denied genius. As a young man he had written a good bit of verse that was technically competent without having much content. He had even published one poem that Lamb had praised, but he realized painfully that he did not have the metaphorical vision of experience that produces great poetry. "They are not *original,*" he said of his poems, "which is saying, they are not worth anything. They may possess sense, fancy etc.—but they always recall other and better poems."

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But FitzGerald was no moper, and the attractive part of his nature reasserted itself. What might have made him a sour misanthrope was instead responsible for his greatest achievements. Another man might have attempted to surpass the works of others, but he contented himself with suggesting only half-humorously how much he could improve them by pruning, and he went so far as to assemble reduced versions of famous novels and poems for his own pleasure. Of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* he wrote, "There's a Work of *Genius* indeed, wearisome and aggravating as it is: I could make *that* a readable Book with a Pair of Scissors, I believe." On another occasion he told a friend that "though I cannot write poems, you know I consider that I have the old woman's faculty of judging of them: yes, much better than much cleverer and wiser men; I pretend to no Genius, but to Taste: which, according to my aphorism, is the feminine of Genius." Since boyhood he had collected snippets from other authors and pasted them into notebooks, often with notes about their possible improvement, but that harmless occupation promised little; for almost twenty years after leaving Cambridge he published nothing but one poem.

In 1849 he was asked to write a memoir of his older friend, Bernard Barton, a minor Quaker poet, to serve as preface to a posthumous volume of Barton's poems that he was helping edit. Significantly, he regarded this as a turning point in his life: "I have been obliged to turn Author on the very smallest scale," he told Tennyson's brother. Barton had been a careless poet, and FitzGerald felt no qualms about rewriting awkward or mawkish lines, or even whole sections of the poems; the frame provided by Barton's work gave him the essential scaffolding on which he could build, even if the inspiration of original poetry eluded him. The events of Barton's life gave him the material with which to write a short prose memoir that is a model of biographical concision. The deservedly kind words about this work that his friends expressed brought about a resurgence of his old ambition. It seems more than coincidental that this should have happened at about the time he was working himself free of his crippling awareness of Thackeray and Tennyson, who had stood as both examples and barriers for him. His own literary career was barely beginning as they reached artistic maturity, which was no doubt frustrating, but it at least indicated that he was becoming his own man, and from here on he took the bit of publishing in his teeth.

The first fruit of his renewed devotion to writing was a reworking in 1851 of an essay in Platonic form on English education, *Euphranor, a Dialogue on Youth,* which was set in Cambridge and which urged on the universities the necessity of social and moral, rather than mere intellectual, guidance for young men. The following year appeared *Polonius: A Collection of Wise Saws and Modern Instances*, which is just what its title promises, a compilation of aphorisms and apothegms that not surprisingly were chosen to echo FitzGerald's own attitudes to life. Neither book would be of much importance were it not that they indicate the increasing freedom FitzGerald felt about reworking the ideas of other men to express his own.

FitzGerald loved foreign languages, and he wrote colloquially, if not always grammatically, in French. By the time of his death he had learned and read with ease seven languages besides English. In 1853 he published his free translations from Spanish of six of Calderón's plays, and three years later he published his first translation from Persian, *Salámán and Absál.* Calling himself "one of the 'most translatingest' men alive," he later published more Calderón dramas and his versions ("per-versions" he insisted) of Sophocles and Aeschylus. FitzGerald fought to keep his name off the title pages of his publications, but he was constitutionally incapable of an impersonal translation. "I am persuaded," he said, "that, to keep *Life* in the Work . . . the Translator (however inferior to his Original) must re-cast that original into his own Likeness, more or less: the less like his original, so much the worse: but still, the live Dog better than the dead Lion."

Above all, of course, there was his "transmutation" of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.* FitzGerald seems to have felt more at home with the "quatrains" of the eleventh-century Persian poet than with any writer nearer home whom he attempted to translate, but perhaps some of the reasons are less paradoxical than they might seem. FitzGerald

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said little of how much of his own feelings he consciously recognized in Omar; a century and a quarter later the poem seems almost as much a deliberately assumed identity as does any of Browning's personae, and like Browning's dramatic monologues it reveals as much of the poet beneath as it does of the created character. Although he hated to offend his friends by open religious contention, since leaving Cambridge, FitzGerald had become increasingly unorthodox in his opinions, an attitude that he instinctively sensed in Omar's poetry. In the character of the Persian, he felt able to embody his belief in a fatalistic universe where contemplation of beauty and frank delight in the physical world become the most sensible choice of man, who is impotent to control his destiny. Hanging over the ripe imagery of the poem is the shadowy suggestion of sexual indulgence, an implicit inclination that we can perhaps recognize more easily in FitzGerald's own nature than he could himself. But it is never more than a hint, and any overt decadence is kept firmly at bay, in spite of the languorous rhythms of the poem.

How much of himself he put into the translation is indicated by his method of composition. Rather than stay at his desk to be sure that he did not depart from the Persian, he would read it over, then go for a long walk in the countryside as he composed his own version of Omar's original verses, using them essentially as material for his own musings. The result is that the poem conveys little of the transparency or invisibility of literal translation, since we are always more conscious of FitzGerald's personality than of Omar's.

The story is well known of how the *Rubáiyát* was published anonymously in 1859, then lay unsold until Rossetti and Swinburne bought copies for themselves from the bargain box outside the door of Quaritch, the bookdealer. It was, however, nearly a decade before the identity of its author was known even in literary circles, and longer before it was public knowledge. FitzGerald died before the peak of the near-mania over his work, but it had been recognized as a masterpiece long before that. Its publication and eventual recognition seem at last to have given him complete assurance in using the works of other men as raw material for his own. For several decades the *Rubáiyát* became far more popular than any single work of either Tennyson or Thackeray. FitzGerald was not the man to make much of such a fact, but it would have given him considerable satisfaction, even if he was too modest and clear-sighted ever to assert seriously that he was a better artist than his friends.

At his death he left his unpublished manuscripts to Aldis Wright of Trinity College with instructions to publish anything that he thought worthwhile, and with no admonitions about anonymity. As FitzGerald's literary executor, Wright had discretion to publish his correspondence, a possibility that FitzGerald clearly envisaged.

To anyone bearing the chronology of his life in mind while reading this new edition of his letters, it is noticeable that, after the publication of the *Rubáiyát*, FitzGerald's correspondence took on an increased self-awareness. And it is in the letters of 1861 that one first becomes aware of a habit that is apparent during the last twenty years of FitzGerald's life: that of deliberate repetition of phrases from letter to letter. It is not the forgetfulness of old age (he was only fifty-two when the practice first became habitual); rather it seems the conscious honing and refining of language as he tries to make each phrase more exact, more fluid, in apparent preparation, however unconscious, for eventual publication. Surely he would be pleased that his letters have at last been brought to a wider readership, and he could hardly have hoped for a more satisfactory edition of them than the Terhunes have provided.

None of this, however, is to say that FitzGerald was without reticence or that he willingly gave away his inner life. He wrote enchantingly of his friends, of books, of the countryside, of his houses, of sailing, of music and painting, but seldom of his innermost thoughts and emotions. He was a man of strong feelings, and to describe them was to court the embarrassment of sentimentality, from which he carefully veered away. When his favorite sister lay dying he wrote laconically: "I somehow think I shall lose the only one of my Family I greatly care for." After the collapse of his short-lived marriage, the most detailed account he could bring himself to give of its misery was in a letter to Emily

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Tennyson: "My married Life has come to an end: I am back again in old Quarters, living as for the last thirty years—only so much older, sadder, uglier and worse! If People want to go further for the cause of all this Blunder than the fact of two People of very determined habits and Temper, first trying to change them at close on fifty—they may lay nine tenths of the Blame on me. I don't want to talk more of the matter, but one must say something."

Surely, FitzGerald knew best about his own weakness for sentimentality. The only considerable body of letters in which he gives a free reign to his feelings are those from 1866 to 1870 in which he repetitively sings the praises of a Lowestoft sailor, "Posh" Fletcher, who seemed to him to embody all the masculine virtues. His overwhelming admiration—love is not too strong a word—for a handsome and almost certainly designing young married man must have been embarassing for his friends, but it was not for him. Posh, he would unselfconsciously tell his acquaintances, "looks exactly like one of the Phidian Marbles dressed in blue Trowsers and Guernsey Jacket: with a like grandeur of character to line this Outside; only his Hands are those of Michael Angelo's Statues, and he fills up my 'Foksal' like one of the Prophets from the Sistine Chapel. Oh, how much more Gentlemanly than the Gentlemen on the Pier! And how very much more Ladylike than the Ladies there! Simple, good, true, bashful." Presumably FitzGerald thought this was an objective description; certainly, it tells us more of his chaotic emotions than he would have wanted to face directly. But he was fifty-eight and Posh was thirty years his junior; in the sad certainty that such a friendship was doomed, he wrote: "I seem to have jumped back to a regard of near forty years ago, and while I am with him feel young again, and when he goes shall feel old again."

The truth, of course, is that no man can write some four thousand letters without revealing a good deal of himself, however inadvertently. In the letter describing Posh, he asks of "Sea and Sailors" the curious question, "Why do they revive one's Love of Greek?" The answer is not difficult to guess. When FitzGerald was thinking of other persons or of things exterior to himself, such as Greek, he constantly used them as counters for his own ideas and emotions, just as he had used Omar's poetry to discourse on his own beliefs. It is largely because these letters unintentionally reveal a great deal about the lovable, lazy, complicated FitzGerald that they are so fascinating.

Even the countryside around him became a metaphor for his own feelings. In 1844 he wrote of his delightful Suffolk cottage: "I live in a hut with walls as thin as a sixpence: windows that don't shut: a clay soil safe beneath my feet: a thatch perforated by lascivious sparrows over my head. . . . This is one of the ugliest places in England—one of the dullest—it has not the merit of being bleak on a grand scale." Yet only three months later, to the same correspondent, he wrote of his life there: "I read of mornings—the same old books over and over again, having no command of new ones: walk with my great black dog of an afternoon, and at evening sit with open windows, up to which China roses climb, with my pipe, while the blackbirds and thrushes begin to rustle bedwards in the garden, and the nightingale to have the neighbourhood to herself. . . . How old to tell of, how new to see!" But it was surely FitzGerald who had changed, not Suffolk.

All his life he loved the theater, opera, and concerts; as he grew older he seldom went to London except for hurried business day trips, so that he could sleep again in Suffolk at nightfall. But for years he had accompanied his mother from Portland Place to her boxes at the opera and the theater, and the memories of his youth were so strong that he could accurately compare the singers and actors of his old age with those he had seen in the 1830s. In 1872 he recalled in detail the great Pasta forty years before in Cherubini's *Medea:* "I used to admire as much as anything her Attitude and Air as she stood at the side of the Stage when Jason's Bridal Procession came on: motionless, with one finger in her golden girdle: a habit which (I heard) she inherited from Grassini." He was less impressed by later performers: he thought Jenny Lind a brilliant mechanical toy as a singer, and once he stomped out of Irving's *Hamlet*, shouting at him in disappointment as he went.

Beside the door in his house stood a Minima chamber organ, on which he would transcribe Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Handel,

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and—surprisingly—Wagner, whom he seems to have heard performed elsewhere only by a brass band on Lowestoft pier. With good sense he admired the originality and depth of thought in Beethoven but gave his love to Handel. "As to Mozart, he was, as a musical genius, more wonderful than all. I was astonished at the Don Giovanni lately. It is certainly the Greatest Opera in the world." It would be pleasant to have heard him singing all the parts of the opera in his uncertain tenor voice.

In literature as elsewhere his tastes were informed and very decided. He loved the novels of Scott, Dickens, Trollope, and Wilkie Collins but could not bear George Eliot's books and felt, at best, only qualified enthusiasm for Jane Austen. With the exception of Tennyson, few contemporary poets commanded much respect from him. He could hardly bring himself to read Rossetti or either of the Brownings. "The Cockneys are now making a tremendous effort to set up Shelley as *the* Apollo of his time: for a true Poet I recognise him: but too unsubstantial for me: and poor Keats' little finger worth all his Body: not to mention Byron, with all his faults." To Wordsworth's virtues he remained blind, calling him "the Daddy" in mockery of what he thought was overearnestness. It was only his fondness for Thomas Carlyle, who visited him in Suffolk and who was often his host in London, that kept him trying to read Carlyle's works. His literary opinions were always expressed with vigor, showing how much books meant to him.

Great letter writers need time, and of that FitzGerald had plenty. He also had the necessary detachment from the world, both emotional and geographical, to see it clearly. Above all, he loved writing, asking of his correspondents only an occasional answer, delight in hearing what he had to say, and returned affection. He would probably have said that he wrote about his friends and his surroundings, not himself, that he was an observer rather than an initiator in life, but it is a distinction that becomes increasingly blurred, and we see demonstrated the truism that vicarious experience can be as intense as a more direct sort. FitzGerald may tell us little directly about his own life, but there are few pleasanter ways of becoming intimate with the Victorian world than these volumes, and by the time we have finished them, we feel that we know and love FitzGerald far better than ever he might have expected. I doubt that he would have been disappointed in that.

After the Genteel Tradition

THE AIR-LINE TO SEATTLE: STUDIES IN LITERARY AND HISTORICAL WRITING ABOUT AMERICA. *By Kenneth S. Lynn. University of Chicago Press. $17.50.*

Reviewed by PETER SHAW

Starting slowly in the mid-1970s and then picking up momentum, Kenneth Lynn, the literary critic and historian, began publishing essays and reviews of a notably challenging and discomfiting kind. Repeatedly calling into question the assumptions of contemporary scholars, he gradually made the case that the American past was being systematically misrepresented. In his literary essays he identified as myths influential interpretations of Emerson, Whitman, Mark Twain, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald. In essays on American history and culture, he found similar mythifications of the American Revolution, Jefferson, slavery, the Civil War, and early twentieth century social history.

It would be hard to conceive of an indictment more injurious to the self-esteem of American intellectuals than the one set forth in the essays now collected in *The Air-Line to Seattle*. In the first place, Lynn identifies the intellectuals as carriers of the "genteel tradition." George Santayana coined the phrase to describe the mannerly shrinking from life characteristic of nineteenth and early twentieth century New Englanders. They were typified by their mannered, humorless writing, their scholarly removal from the brawling vibrancy of American life, and their high-flown, self-serving moralism. Of course, the critics and scholars who have come under Lynn's scrutiny are proud of having cultivated in themselves precisely the opposite qualities. They speak not from the ivory tower—

PETER SHAW's most recent book is *American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution.*

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though by now most of them are college professors—and not in recoil from, but as champions of, the masses. They are the opponents of Victorian puritanism, of apologetics for the status quo, of retrograde, stuffy attitudes toward sexual liberation, and of all the other stifling proprieties of gentility.

And yet when Eleanor Roosevelt's letters of the 1930s revealed that she had a lesbian lover, scholarly apologists contrived to sidestep the plain meaning of the evidence. Another scholar, the biographer of Ralph Waldo Emerson, was so restrained by "hagiographical piety," in Lynn's phrase, that he refrained from inquiring into Emerson's true relationship to business civilization. On the other hand, this scholar, in common with others writing about American business, did not allow the facts to restrain him from delivering ritual denunciations of making money as a vulgar act. Finally, critics of Mark Twain have been so intent on treating *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as another kind of indictment of American civilization that they interpret the book "with a deadly literal-mindedness." (Here Lynn confesses to having once misread the ending of this work in the service of such a view.)

Lynn argues that successive generations of American intellectuals have been characterized by easily shocked sensibilities. In response to the realities of their times, they have adopted stances of outraged probity and have typically translated their recoil into indictments of their country. Their own political preferences have been consistently abstract and idealized. In the 1960s the habits of mind and spirit of such intellectuals took the form of self-indulgent shock at the wickedness of the Vietnam War. This particular distress of the intelligentsia carried over into the 1970s, when it produced, as Lynn puts it, "a host of dubious theories, old and new."

Our failure to notice the perpetuation of the genteel tradition, one begins to realize, is a product of the historical and literary myths produced by the scholarship that Kenneth Lynn has anatomized. The most prominent of these myths is the drama of twentieth century revolt from the supposedly monolithic traditionalism of nineteenth century middle-class culture. Lynn points out that the nineteenth century did not lack for iconoclasts. There were many who resisted their age's consensus about "laissez-fair capitalism, the Christian religion, the role of women in America and many other matters." Subsequently, the pre–World War I revolt of Greenwich Village bohemia, for example, may have expressed itself in modern terms, but it was the product of children reared by nineteenth century skeptics. The spirit of Greenwich Village, therefore, expressed an indigenous American tradition.

The so-called lost generation of the twenties has been falsely made into another supposedly innovating, rebellious group protest against the past, when really it merely inherited the attitudes of the Greenwich Village rebels. The disaffections of the twenties literati, furthermore, were widely shared in the bourgeois society they congratulated themselves on being set apart from. Nor was the lost generation as liberated as cultural historians would have it. Its most representative figure, F. Scott Fitzgerald, along with his creation, Jay Gatsby, were both sexually, as Lynn says, "as inhibited as any Puritan."

The patterns being imposed on the past, Lynn is suggesting, have had a present use. The liberal causes favored by most academics and intellectuals today are attractively legitimized by the notion of a puritanical American business civilization bravely being challenged by a few free spirits. Of course there is good precedent for cultural historians to appropriate the past in the service of their ideals. But Lynn charges that the present generation has gone further than this by allowing its predilections to overwhelm scholarship and good sense.

Specifically, liberal critics have been responsible for transmitting a set of radical myths whose origins reach as far back as the 1930s. The picture of an embattled lost generation derives from this period, for example —most notably from Malcolm Cowley's Stalinist and immediately post-Stalinist phases. Lynn charges Cowley with advancing his version of the past through "the exploitation of an author's work for ideological purposes." In an essay titled "Malcolm Cowley Forgets," Lynn charges further that reviewers of Cowley's self-serving memoir of the 1930s, *The Dream of the Golden Mountains*, certified as "honest" what they could not help but recognize as a systematic misrepresentation of history. In a similar fashion, reviewers praised

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Garry Wills's *Inventing America* "without once acknowledging its shameless pandering to leftist prejudices." Politics is the name that the genteel critics of today dare not speak.

Something went very much awry in the intellectual world during the course of the 1970s. Confronting the evasions and conformities of contemporary scholarship as they came along, Lynn was not in a position to offer a unified explanation for what was happening. In some cases he blamed liberal apologists, while in others he found the scholarly culprits simply to have been naive. In at least one case he was not sure. Thus he has now revised his criticism of the historian Bernard Bailyn's views of the American Revolution, replacing a personal explanation of Bailyn's motives with a political one.

But if Lynn has not singlehandedly solved the enigma of scholarly and intellectual decline in our time, he stands out as one of the first critics, and undoubtedly the most vigorous and wide-ranging one, to have called it to public attention. The essays in *The Air-Line to Seattle* pose a disturbing challenge to contemporary criticism and scholarship. It remains to be seen whether the book will attract the attention it deserves and lead to the rethinking that its essays demand.

Through a Brandy Snifter Lightly

THE RARE ART TRADITIONS: THE HISTORY OF ART COLLECTING AND ITS LINKED PHENOMENA WHEREVER THESE HAVE APPEARED. *By Joseph Alsop. Harper & Row. $59.95.*

Reviewed by EUGENE VICTOR THAW

This is a book written by an "amateur," which in itself is no bad thing. It unfolds rather like good dinner-table conversation in a privileged world. Dazzling exhibitions of miscellaneous learning are served up as a series of anecdotes about obscure episodes in the history of art; sarcastic comments are tossed off about fakes, the shady art market, and superprices; and finally, after dinner over brandy near the fire, we are astounded to hear from our learned host the startling insight he has derived from all his travels and deep reading. This is it. Listen carefully because no one has ever said this before:

Only five cultures in the whole history of mankind ever collected art, at least as Joseph Alsop defines the activity. All others—the overwhelming majority of known peoples of the past—did not. Interesting, yet somehow not the expected bombshell. But now our aristocratic scholar enumerates the five historical cultures that are the only ones to have engaged in true collecting, and because there are only five, he calls the tradition of collecting art "rare." These cultures are: (1) the Greeks and Romans of the ancient world, (2) the Chinese, (3) the Japanese, (4) the Islamic cultures, and (5) the Western world from the Renaissance to the present. Immediately, and rather snobbishly, one thinks: What else is there? How about the Chaldeans, the Incas, the Sepik River tribes, the Eskimos, the Pygmies, or Cro-Magnon men? But our host would doubtless reply that although these cultures made art, they did not form collections or have art markets, superprices, fakes, art historians, or museums.

Before the brandy glasses are refilled, our gentleman-scholar, showing off a little, tells us that among the nonrare majority of art traditions that did not form collections were the Southern Nuba body painters; but, of course, heh, heh, they couldn't.

I regret that I was not present at any of Mr. Alsop's scintillating dinners (with the exception of a private lunch long ago) because I would have enjoyed his conversation immensely. He is a marvelous raconteur, and many of his stories of the artists, kings, and conquerors of the great civilizations in *The Rare Art Traditions* are new to me, even though I have studied and given thought to some of these matters. However, it is his book we must consider, not after-dinner talk. His is a book, moreover, of nearly five hundred pages, along with hundreds of footnotes, the whole organized by a small army of art historians, archaeologists, and other friends of the author who over many years have been pressed into service by him for information, translations, and supporting arguments. In

EUGENE VICTOR THAW's work has appeared in the *Spectator* and *The Times* (London). He is the co-editor, with Francis V. O'Connor, of *Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné of Painting, Drawings, and Other Works.*

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view of the less-than-startling thesis that has come of all this effort, one can justifiably comment here, as Huxley once said of Kant, "His baggage train is longer than his army."

In deference to the wide range of his subject in *The Rare Art Tradition*, Mr. Alsop must not only strike the pose of universal historian but also that of philosopher of art. Early in the book we have this definition of art, printed in italics and later endlessly repeated as if it were the Holy Grail, *"Art is whatever the human hand makes with art, and making with art is making to please the eye."* I am no trained philosopher, but even if I were, I should have the gravest difficulty grasping how this tautological description helps our understanding.

Later, likening the more artfully wrought hand axes of *Homo erectus* of the late Archeulian era to Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, the latter made for use on an altar, Mr. Alsop's definition progresses to read "art-for-use-plus-beauty." It is the habit of "normal" human cultures to treat all art as something for a useful purpose—ritual, holding liquid, to sit on, etc. The rare art traditions of the book's title ignore those original purposes in order to gather and contemplate art apart from those purposes—to consider it only qua art. I must mention Kant again because Mr. Alsop quotes and then demolishes his concept that true art must be, and can only be, an "end in itself." The whole debate over art and craft that raged in the nineteenth century and, indeed, since men began to think about the purpose and meaning of art, is beyond my scope here, as it is beyond the author's understanding in his book. Suffice it to say, he has completely misunderstood Kant's meaning and taken too simplistic a view of the activity of making works of art for a specific purpose. What Kant means, of course, is that the quality that makes them art is the true end of a Raphael altarpiece or a Michelangelo *Pietà* and not their intended use as ornaments in a chapel.

It is this same kind of fundamental philosophical misunderstanding that causes the rest of Mr. Alsop's argument to flounder. The bulk of the book—the Scheherazade-like series of stories about ancient China, Japan, the Persian caliphs, the Medici, Isabella d'Este, King Charles I, and others—is an immense digression to demonstrate the difference between art patronage (or art ordered for some use) and art collecting, which Alsop sees as gathering art together for no use. But now prepare for another definition in the author's italics: *"To collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy, as magpies fancy things that are shiny, and a collection is what has been gathered."*

The sarcasm is apparent. So, too, is Mr. Alsop's inability to decide whether art collecting is, on balance, a good thing or a manifestation of decadence. He seems to be on both sides of the question, depending which chapter or context one happens to be reading at the moment. One of his often-reiterated arguments, which I should have thought was self-evident, is that the collecting of "named" artists of the past—as opposed to, for instance, the patronizing of contemporary masters—to decorate one's palace is a function of the "historical sense." This phenomenon leads to the development of art history as a scholarly subject and to the mechanism of an art market to satisfy demand. The market, in turn, eventually, generates superprices, and, of course, fakes. Finally, museums are founded to make official the accumulations of art works from a historical past, removed from their original context or use. This obvious connection of collecting and a "historical sense" is the whole substance of our rambling author's book, along with much scattered erudition.

But about collecting itself as an activity in those "rare" traditions that, nevertheless, constitute the bulk of civilized history, Joseph Alsop tells us little of any significance. He offers no theory of collecting or examination of motive apart from the usual clever comments about greed, status, and neurosis. Since art collecting is an activity in only a minority of cultures, it is therefore, in Alsop's view, not a "normal" instinct of mankind but an abnormal one. Of the "linked phenomena" that art collecting engenders, only art history seems to find favor with our author—never art markets, which he scorns as he does museums, which he calls tombs. Even when he discusses archaeology, a subject in which he is clearly more at home than he is in collecting or art history, Alsop attacks the excavators of forgotten cultures for disturbing the mounds and kurgans of the Asian steppes, for instance, and exhibiting their finds to the world instead of letting them stay preserved forever under the

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"silent earth." These archaeologists were not "agents of the art market," he admits, but, equally nefarious, "active agents of the museum branch of art collecting."

As Mr. Alsop reminds us, we do not see works of art from other cultures as they were originally seen by their intended audiences, and we never shall, no matter with how much erudition we surround them. It is also apparent that art markets and museums tend to magnify the art quality of such works and further isolate them from their original meanings and contexts. Yet sometimes the art quality of an object is all we have when we know little or nothing of the people who made it. And that quality is no mean thing. It has been said before that artists themselves sometimes have no idea of the resonance of the works of art that they send out into the world. Works of art can take on different meanings in different contexts and contain ideas and truths far beyond the limitations of their original intention.

Like the tree that falls in the forest with no one to hear it fall, Mr. Alsop, I think, would like all works of art to remain unlooked at and uncoveted qua art—to stay buried in the ground or hidden in the service of long-forgotten purposes. Nowhere in this book is there any sense of the author's own delectation of art itself. Seldom does he show any understanding that it is more than a market commodity and represents more than historical evidence from the past. Yet it is one of few glories of our complex modern age that we have learned to apprehend art for its own sake and not only for its religious, courtly, or warlike uses. For all their faults, museums preserve worthy objects of every kind from the decay, neglect, and outright destruction that have, alas, removed from the world so much we would still like to possess. And, finally, the collecting impulses of mankind—which Alsop likens to the "bower-bird" for all of its manifestations of greed, rapaciousness, and mania—has helped enormously to rescue from oblivion much that we now enjoy. The art market, which is easy to attack with cheap shots at superprices and references to dishonest art dealers (are there no dishonest art historians?), has played a significant role in identifying quality and guiding taste and needs its own history to be written one day.

Works of art have a more complicated relationship to us than merely, as Alsop puts it, "what the human hand makes with art" that gives pleasure. They communicate ideas in their own visual language. Like works of literature, poems, novels, and essays, they are subject to changes of taste and fashion, but insofar as they are prized, they are not allowed to disappear. Collecting, markets, and museums circulate and make works of art available, so that we have the opportunity to view and to know which among them we prefer; and this, I would argue, is another small advantage of our "abnormal" but eclectic time.

That cultures with "historical sense" tend to elevate artists—the "remembered names," as Alsop calls them, both living and dead—to a status far above that accorded to the anonymous craftsmen of more "normal" cultures seems to me no bad thing either. Nor am I offended that rich men, institutions, or even nations should on occasion compete to pay a superprice for an outstanding work of art instead of only doing it for racehorses, yachts, or weapons. I would be much more offended if they did not.

In spite of the exaggerated claims made by Joseph Alsop for the astounding discovery of his central thesis, much of his ramble through the esoterica of art collecting, particularly the chapters on China and the Greeks and Romans, makes fascinating reading. Considering the scanty surviving records, many of his guesses and insights into the history of art collecting are inspired. Mr. Alsop himself is a man of a vanishing type and the possessor of an admirable curiosity. He emerges from this book more impressive than his argument.

Affair of State

H. H. ASQUITH: LETTERS TO VENETIA STANLEY. *Edited by Michael and Eleanor Brock. Oxford University Press. $35.*

Reviewed by JACOB A. STEIN

H. H. Asquith is almost unknown today. He, and most of the others fastened to World War I, have been moved back by the passage of

JACOB A. STEIN is a practicing attorney in Washington, D.C.

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time. Herbert Henry Asquith was born in 1852. As one might expect, he went to Oxford, which gave him its scholarships and its highest academic honors in classical studies. For most of his life he epitomized what the British upper class so prizes: seemingly effortless accomplishment.

After Oxford, Asquith took up the law. In 1876 he commenced his career as a barrister and he married Helen Melland, the daughter of a Manchester physician. Her pictures disclose the rather plain-looking woman whose only interest during the marriage was the care of her family.

Ten years later Asquith was earning a good living as a lawyer. He also had obtained a seat in parliament in return for the time he had given to politics. Misfortune struck in September of 1891. His wife died, suddenly, of typhoid fever, leaving him with five children, the oldest twelve and the youngest eighteen months.

After his wife's death, Asquith began his habit of unburdening himself in letters to women he thought would be sympathetic to his reflections on himself and the passing scene. In one such letter to a woman of his acquaintance he gave a hint of the frustration that lay behind his stoic exterior. When he knew that he would be given a cabinet position in the Gladstone administration, he wrote that, although he had gratified his great ambition to be a member of the cabinet before he was forty, he still had not, "as I know I am never likely to have, what I really want."

In May 1894, when Asquith was forty-two, he married Margot Tennant, the daughter of a rich baronet. Despite her striking absence of physical beauty, she had contrived to make herself a controversial and much-talked-about figure in the best English society. Margot Asquith was very different from Asquith's first wife, who devoted none of her time to such things.

In 1895 Asquith's Liberal party was defeated in a general election. Although Asquith himself was re-elected, he of course lost the cabinet post that Gladstone had given him. His party was returned in 1906, and within two years Asquith was prime minister. Lloyd George said that Asquith had won his way to the premiership entirely by superb talent and parliamentary achievement. He had neither rank nor wealth to help him along.

Now enter Venetia Stanley. Her first view of Asquith was of a fifty-eight-year-old, somewhat corpulent man of middle height. The corpulence was the product of years of infrequent exercise and too-frequent dining on the heavy meals prepared by the chefs of the wealthy. He was careless of his personal appearance and often in need of a haircut.

What did Asquith see when he met Venetia Stanley? Here was a very attractive, highly intelligent brunette, twenty-five years old, surrounded by ardent suitors. She was in the process of selecting a husband from among them. It was this young lady who drew forth the astonishing stream of letters from the man who many would have thought the busiest in the world. We have only his side of the correspondence. Venetia Stanley's letters apparently did not survive.

The correspondence begins in 1910 with a bit of poetry. Thereafter the letters follow a pattern. Asquith recalls with pleasure any meeting that Venetia and he had immediately before the letter was written. Then there is a review of the people Asquith meets during the course of his day and a commentary on the flow of events. There are frequent literary references, including allusions to the classics. Asquith often sets up literary puzzles for Venetia.

Asquith gives his contemporaneous reaction to his great contemporaries, among them Winston Churchill. In the letter of February 26, 1915, he writes: "Our War Counsel lasted nearly 2 1/2 hours. Winston was in some ways at his worst—having quite a presentable case. He was noisy, rhetorical, tactless & temperless—or—full."

The letters give the pace of life at the very center of events. One sees the actors in the round, in their various moods, and in their indecision in the face of the innumerable variables that reality presents.

The editors, Michael and Eleanor Brock, arrange the series of letters, which begin in April 1915, so that they read as if they were a fascinating novel. The plot is simple enough. Venetia is the object of the love of Asquith and also of Asquith's close friend and political secretary, Edwin Montagu. In letter after letter, Montagu presses Venetia to marry him. She is reluctant to end things with Asquith. She keeps Asquith in the dark until she agrees to marry Montagu. On May 12, 1915, she

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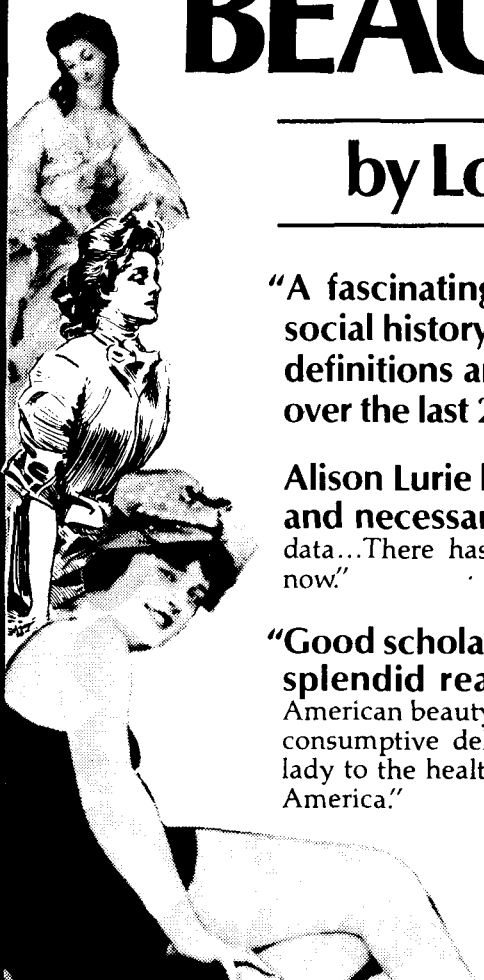
by Lois Banner



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breaks the news. She tells Asquith of her engagement to marry Montagu. It strikes like a hammer. Asquith writes to Venetia on May 12, 1915:

Most loved—

As you know well, this breaks my heart.
I couldn't bear to come and see you.
I can only pray God to bless you—and help me.

Although Venetia wished to find a quiet week to disengage from Asquith, she hit him at one of the worst weeks of his premiership. On May 12, 1915, the morning papers carried the news of German atrocities, and the press raised the question of whether Asquith had the resolve to fight an all-out war. Asquith never convinced the press or the people that he was the man for such a job. Eventually, Lloyd George stepped forward to fill that role, deposing Asquith, who left office never to return. Asquith had little influence in politics once out of office. He collected a few evening honors as the years slipped by, and he died in 1928.

Edwin Montagu and Venetia married. It is reported that the marriage was not an entirely happy one. Montagu's public career ended shortly after the marriage, and he died, rather young, at age forty-five. During the nine years of her marriage, Venetia did not write Asquith. Directly after Montagu's death, Venetia wrote a very touching letter to Asquith (included in Roy Jenkins's biography of Asquith but not included in this collection), and with it the story ends:

My darling Mr. Asquith,

Edwin asked me to give you something of his and I finally thought you might like this Hamlet which I'd given him a long time ago. I've never thanked you for your divine letter, you know how dumb and inarticulate I am, but you do realise I hope how glad I was to get it. I hope I may see you sometime when you get back.

Much love always,
Venetia

The letters, their frequency, sometimes three a day, and the intensity of feeling Asquith expressed, raise several questions. The first is, Did Asquith think these letters would ever be published? Asquith was very reticent in his published memoirs. In most matters he was discrete. The letters contain so much that is indiscrete—from secret information about the conduct of the war to personal information about his friends and associates—that it is doubtful that Asquith could have had in mind publication. Nevertheless, from time to time he did tell Venetia in the letters that she had an incomparable picture of the times.

The second question, and a more interesting one, is whether Asquith's relationship with Venetia affected the conduct of his office. The editors review the evidence and conclude that, even when Venetia told Asquith of her engagement, he still carried on unimpaired. Some may think the proof points the other way. It was not the war that was on Asquith's mind in early May 1915. It was Venetia Stanley. A letter of Asquith's wife, Margot, shows that she was suspicious of what was going on. It would take quite a man to give his attention to his office when his mind was filled with love for a spirited young woman, not to speak of having to deal with the suspicions of his wife and with the humiliation of seeing his closest working partner take away the love of his life.

Arthur Schopenhauer would have enjoyed this book. Would he have read all the letters? Probably not. But the first fifty would have given Schopenhauer confirmation of his comment that no matter how sexual love disguises itself, it has

an unfavourable influence on the most important affairs, interrupts every hour the most serious occupations, and sometimes perplexes for a while even the greatest minds. It does not hesitate to intrude with its trash, and to interfere with the negotiations of statesmen and the investigations of the learned. It knows how to slip its love notes and ringlets even into ministerial portfolios and philosophical manuscripts. Everyday it brews and hatches the worst and most perplexing quarrels and disputes and destroys the most valuable relationships, and breaks the strongest bonds. It demands the sacrifice sometimes of life or health, sometimes of wealth, position, and happiness. Indeed, it robs of all conscience those who were previously honourable and upright, and makes traitors of those who have hitherto been loyal and faithful. Accordingly, it appears on the whole as a malevolent demon, striving to pervert, to confuse, and to overthrow everything. If we consider all this, we are induced to exclaim: Why all this noise and fuss? Is it merely a question of every Jack finding his Jill? Why should such a trifle play so important a role, and constantly intro-

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duce disturbance and confusion into the well-regulated life of man? To the earnest investigator, however, the spirit of truth gradually reveals the answer. It is no trifle that is here in question; on the contrary, the importance of the matter is perfectly in keeping with the earnestness and ardour of the effort. The ultimate aim of all love affairs, whether played in sock or in buskin, is actually more important than all other aims in man's life; and therefore it is quite worthy of the profound seriousness with which everyone pursues it. What is decided by it is nothing less than the composition of the next generation.

Interestingly, David Lloyd George, who pushed Asquith aside, also fell well within Schopenhauer's dictum. Lloyd George carried on a long love affair with his secretary, Miss Frances Stevenson. He was much luckier in politics than Asquith and much luckier in love. He finally married Miss Stevenson and lived happily ever after. Lloyd George was not a letter writer, and so we must look to Frances Stevenson's diary for the details of that particular story.

Macho, Man

AMERICA AND THE PATTERNS OF CHIVALRY. *By John Fraser. Cambridge University Press. $19.95.*

Reviewed by STEPHEN MILLER

What is distinctive about the United States's social and political institutions, its art and literature? Many observers, both domestic and foreign, have been preoccupied with this question. The search for the uniqueness of American culture has resulted in many distinguished books that are judicious mixtures of description, analysis, and speculation, yet the search has its dangers. For every Tocqueville, there have been innumerable observers who have been so bent on discerning what is distinctive about the United States that they have allowed themselves to fall in love with a grand thesis about American civilization—the thesis usually supported with quotations culled from a bewildering variety of sources. Such books try less to persuade the reader than to force him into submission. "This is the way America works," the writer seems to say, "and by God I've got the evidence to prove it!"

Unfortunately, John Fraser's study of what he calls "chivalric patterns" in American culture is a case in point. His grand thesis is that Americans are less animated by profit than by honor. America's representative man, he implies, is not Benjamin Franklin but Theodore Roosevelt: Roughrider, cowboy, soldier, explorer. And to prove his point that "chivalric patterns were incorporated into American life during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," he lards his book with an immense amount of quotations—from the classics of American literature to the odds and ends of popular culture.

But what exactly does Fraser's thesis signify? To say that Americans like stories about heroes—whether knights, soldiers, cowboys, or private detectives—is not saying very much. Nor is it saying very much to argue that Americans like to cast themselves in the heroic mold, regarding themselves as men of honor. It is hard to see what is distinctively American about a liking for heroes or a desire to act honorably. Even Fraser admits that "America has not, of course, been *sui generis* in its dealings with the chivalric." In any case, the chivalric heroes that Americans admire so much have been popular throughout the world.

Moreover, why does Fraser speak of a chivalric pattern rather than simply a heroic one? Chivalry implies not only a sense of honor but other qualities as well: courtliness of manner, nobility of descent. Yet Fraser lists among America's favorite chivalric heroes "honest cops like Dick Tracy, and fearless investigative reporters, and incorruptible district attorneys, and upstanding young doctors like Doctor Kildare." Everywhere Fraser looks he finds evidence to support his contention. Everything in American culture is grist for his mill, so that one wants to ask: Who is not a chivalric hero? Jack Anderson? Billy Martin?

Armed with the vague and capacious notion of a chivalric pattern, Fraser proceeds to invoke this outlook as a major factor in American history. According to him, "chivalric-martial ideology" has had a pernicious effect on

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American politics, resulting in what he calls the machismo of several "theatrical and chivalric-martial presidents," whose sense of honor meant a mindless desire for war. "The notion of national honor," Fraser says, "has gone on figuring in American saber-rattling politics."

Needless to say, the notion of a chivalric-martial ideology as an explanation—even a partial explanation—of the United States's decision to send troops to Korea or Vietnam leaves something to be desired. The mindlessness and vulgarity of Fraser's analysis of American foreign policy in the post–World War II era are extraordinary. "In the aftermath of the Second World War," he says, "there were McCarthyism and Spillaneism to contend with, a rightism in which the patriotic Irish figure prominently." He speaks of Truman as the "President who took America Lone Rangering into Korea" and Johnson as the president whose "macho pride" took the country "deeper and deeper into the white-against-yellow war." This is not scholarship but yellow journalism.

Fraser's analysis approaches the absurd when he cites *Kim* as a book that made the "Kennedy team" enamored of guerrilla warfare. "The mystique of the guerrilla for the Kennedy team . . . was obviously indebted to the glamorizing of undercover work in books like *Kim*." *Kim* as one of the indirect causes of the war in *Vietnam*? *Kim*—a novel about a charming Indian rogue, a novel written by an Englishman—as evidence of America's infatuation with chivalric ways of conduct? Fraser truly works wonders with his grand thesis.

The chivalric pattern, however, is not something that Fraser regards only with fear and loathing. Chivalry has its bright side as well as its dark one. An addiction to chivalry may make some Americans hanker for violent action, but it gives others a sense of fair play. Americans, Fraser says, "look askance at back stabbing and finking, and . . . feel that loyalty even in a bad cause is preferable to a world of total Machiavellian opportunism." Chivalric ideals, Fraser says, mitigated the harshness of laissez-faire industrialism, and he points out that "it was not simply hypocrisy that made the New York Stock Exchange . . . affirm that 'all within our sacred walls is honest and honorable.' "

Fraser is right to question the notion that American businessmen were animated only by a vulgar social Darwinism, but by the time we reach the final chapters, which take a benign view of chivalry in America, we are numbed by Fraser's attempt to find chivalric values everywhere in American life. To attack Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and John F. Kennedy for their chivalric-martial ideology, and to praise Lincoln as the "greatest embodiment of the chivalric values without the chivalric trappings" is to offer an explanation of American culture that attempts to explain so much that it ends in explaining very little indeed.

The Disease of Idealism

MARXISM AND BEYOND. *By Sidney Hook. Rowman and Littlefield. $19.95.*

Reviewed by LEWIS S. FEUER

A paradox surrounds the life and thought of Sidney Hook. How does it happen that the man who guided a generation of young intellectuals toward Marxism, and who still calls himself a "democratic socialist," is described by newspapers as a forebear of neo-conservatism? Why do so many "liberals" look upon the man to whom John Dewey entrusted the mantle of pragmatic liberalism as another Edmund Burke flailing at the revolution of our times? What manner of authority on Marxism is this who rejects all its contemporary varieties from Leninism and Trotskyism to neo-Marxism, and who diagnoses communism as having been "an aberration . . . a disease of idealism"? The essays in *Marxism and Beyond* give the answers. Moreover, in them Hook has applied his incisive, discerning intelligence to the work of such contemporaries of his as the *New Republic* literary editor, Malcolm Cowley, the professorial politician John Kenneth Galbraith, the scholarly Polish dissident philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, and the academic extremists of the Frankfurt School. Hook's own thought has grown to a classical, many-sided stature; if the daring

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Thorkild Bjørnvig

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My Friendship with Isak Dinesen

Translated by Ingvar Schousboe and William Jay Smith
Introduction by William Jay Smith

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formulations and theses of his youth are gone, they have been replaced by a more abiding wisdom.

Just as Disraeli, the ex-radical, created Tory democracy in Britain, Sidney Hook has, through an unflagging inquiry, possibly rebuilt for an American conservatism a foundation that incorporates whatever was valid in Marxist ideas. The notion, for instance, that economic conflicts mainly underlie political strife, belongs to conservatives, indeed to thinkers generally; one remembers that Webster, Madison, Hamilton, and Franklin took the primacy of economic factors as a "leading principle" in politics long before Marx did. The first Marxist to repudiate Marxist ideology, the relatively conservative Eduard Bernstein, now stands higher in Hook's estimate than either Lenin or Rosa Luxemburg. A kindly, gentle man, Bernstein, the first revisionist, emerges as also the wisest and most prescient in the history of the Marxist working-class movement. Long before Lenin was known, Bernstein warned that without an educated, ethically minded, self-governing working class, "the dictatorship of the proletariat means the dictatorship of club orators and writers," a "dictatorial, revolutionary central power, supported by the terrorist dictatorship. . . ." Bernstein's prediction was verified; he erred in only one regard: the hegemony of the "orators and writers" was a temporary one, giving way quickly to that of the party machine—man and political policeman. And Bernstein further characterized the whole concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a "political atavism," a reversion to lower civilization. Hook, as a young man, talked in 1929 with Bernstein; the memories of the social democratic sage are often with him. Why then was that wisdom rejected during the decade that followed?

In a searching chapter, Hook attributes the appeal that Marxism and communism had for intellectuals in the 1930s to their fear of Nazi triumph. More overriding even than the depression, he writes, was the concern to "prevent Hitler from coming to power and unleashing the program of war and conquest that he had outlined in *Mein Kampf*." That certainly was true; but why was there a loss of faith in the capacity of the social democrats to halt the Nazis? Why the disillusionment with parliamentary socialists? It is difficult nowadays to convey how deeply young idealists were affected by the failure of the huge German social democracy to halt the Nazi seizure of power; the Marxist giant of the Western world proved seemingly helpless. One gloomy evening at the Harvard Liberal Club I heard that sentiment eloquently expressed. The meeting was being addressed by a newly arrived German socialist refugee who sought to explain the collapse of the Weimar Republic. One heard recited the various reasons—the unemployment, the resentment with the Versailles treaty—though the speaker assured us that Nazi economics wouldn't work. Whereupon Professor Gaetano Salvemini arose, the famed Italian historian and battler against Mussolini's fascism. He shook his hand accusingly at the speaker, and his booming voice echoed his quivering accents: "You were all cowards, physical cowards; you were afraid to fight the Nazis when they took your streets and halls; you were afraid to use your fists. That is why Hitler beat you." The sparse audience sat stunned and embarrassed. They had learned from their professors of political science that elections were determined by economic interests, alloyed with ideological doctrines; yet here was this emotional Italian talking so unacademically of cowardice as a historical force; the old man was obviously unsophisticated. But he had clearly spoken the truth. Eduard Bernstein himself was a man of courage; as Hook notes, he was among the first to have stood out against Germany's role in the First World War. But his Social Democratic Party lacked that quality.

Hook's understanding of the mainsprings of revolutionary psychology has deepened, and he writes of Lenin as one who is "not a Carlylean hero" but rather as one possessed by an "absolute fanaticism." It is still the fashion at universities to describe Lenin as a political genius in flexible adaptation. Until 1917, however, Lenin kept repeating the same demand for armed uprising. If the First World War and its consequent dislocations hadn't turned many Russians into a semi-deranged people, this semi-deranged man would not finally have found a stage play that fitted his character. Robert Hunter, an American who had served several times before 1914 as a delegate to the Socialist International, was later frequently asked what impression Lenin had made. Hunter replied that Lenin

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was the last man he "should have picked as a man of destiny"; reputed to be a conspirator, Lenin provoked so much dissension that some believed "he was a paid emissary of the Russian police." He was at the least "a disorganizer, a sectarian . . ." (Robert Hunter, *Revolution: Why, How, When?*, 1946). If Europe's peaceful evolution had not been disrupted by the First World War, this discredited, solitary sectary might have earned a footnote in some *Varieties of Ideological Fanaticism.*

The Marx for whom Hook, however, still preserves an intellectual respect is the Marx whom he read as a boy in the books and tracts in the editions published by the cooperative Charles H. Kerr Company. Perhaps it is sometimes overlooked that the Marx of that time had been censored to omit vulgar, violent, or sickly passages. The Kerr edition, for instance, deleted the anti-Semitic epithet that disfigured the "Theses on Feuerbach." Under Stalin's dictatorship, the epithet was restored; Stalin's editors, while claiming to be more textually loyal, could at the same time enjoy the flavor of anti-Semitism à la Marx.

In the spirit of the social-democratized Marx, Hook emphasizes that Marx nowhere proposed that the dictatorship of the proletariat could possibly take the form of a dictatorship of a Communist party. Engels said explicitly that it would be fulfilled within the framework of a democratic republic. Nonetheless, as Eduard Bernstein told Hook, Marx had a streak of the Bolshevik in him. Marx rendered homage to Louis Auguste Blanqui, who was the advocate of the seizure of power by a small band composed chiefly of déclassés, but for Marx he was also the authorized representative of the French Communist cause and the "class dictatorship of the proletariat." Marx's own address to the Communist League approved of political lynchings ("popular revenge against hated individuals"), executed presumably by an enraged proletariat. Marx ridiculed the British workers' terms of choice in elections, and Engels similarly gibed at "parliamentary cretinism." The socialist intellectuals indoctrinated the workingmen with an ill-fated cynicism toward their hard-earned democratic rights. Marx, too, created the Marxist style for political slander and "character assassination." The British Federal Council finally got so tired of hearing the self-righteous ideologist accusing the workingmen's leaders of having sold themselves to the Liberals that they voted to censure him.

Marx's dictatorial propensity tended to abate during the last years of his life; it remained, however, in some part a component of his political legacy. To be sure, Hook has established that Marx and Dewey both shared the view that "human psychology is social psychology"; indeed, a predecessor American socialist, William English Walling, had found similar equivalences between Marx and William James. As far as the underlying spirit is concerned, however, Marx's imperious intolerance placed him in a world apart from both Dewey and James, and, I would suggest, from Hook himself. Hook shows in a scholarly fashion that all that Marx really would have meant by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was that the legislation to be enacted democratically by a working-class majority would be in the latter's interest. If that were all that Marx meant, why didn't Marx say so? Why did he drag in the word "dictatorship" in the first place, with all the connotations it involved? Possibly his choice of metaphor expressed the psychology of a powerless political intellectual compensating through an overassertion of hard force, in the manner of Machiavelli. One does not know. But the world's workingmen have paid dearly for the revolutionary intellectual's metaphor.

Leftist intellectuals emerge from Hook's pages as a sorry bunch: John Kenneth Galbraith showing an "absence of candor" as he avoids in his autobiography mentioning his euphoria over the "Cultural Revolution" in China; Malcolm Cowley concealing misdeeds and blunders done during his fellow-traveling subservience as literary editor of the *New Republic;* the Frankfurt School exhibiting in its theorizing "contempt for the choice of the masses from the standpoint of a privileged cultural elite," and with its inarticulate slogan evidently "All power to us Hegelians!" Nonetheless, Hook is also, in my view, overgenerous in his judgments of various personalities in the annals of socialism. Eleanor Marx, a daughter doomed to tragedy by her father, was scarcely "level-headed," and Edward Aveling, her companion, whom Bernstein characterized as a scoundrel, is virtually forgiven by Hook for his sins.

Explicating his own outlook on our political

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problems, Hook's essay "In Defense of the Cold War" has a compelling logic that is, to my mind, unanswerable. Will any of his critics dare to meet it point-by-point as he has done with their arguments? In Hook's view, Soviet strategy since the end of the Second World War has gone through two stages: the first covered the period during which the United States enjoyed an unquestionable superiority in nuclear weaponry; the Soviet aim at that time was to induce Western intellectuals through a variety of "international conferences" to help paralyze the Western governments from using their nuclear supremacy (or earlier, their monopoly) to secure liberalizing measures from Stalin and his immediate successors. The vanity of Western intellectuals, their weakness of character, made them pliant instruments of Soviet policy: "The very expressions 'Cold War' and 'Cold Warrior' became epithets of disparagement in the West." The second phase of Soviet strategy began with their attainment of nuclear superiority; thereupon began their advance into strategic salients, Angola, Afghanistan, and the remodeling of Cuban installations for the offensive. The underlying American aim in the cold war, according to Hook, remains one that American policymakers are still reticent to recognize: to achieve in the Communist world "a degree of liberalization that will significantly modify its totalitarian character." In short, the world's peace will remain unstable until the day when the democratically elected Constituent Assembly, which Lenin forcibly dispersed in January 1919, reconvenes in Moscow.

Nurtured on the logical teaching of Morris Cohen and Charles S. Peirce, the conservative philosophy of which Hook is the progenitor is an "experimental conservatism," or a "scientific conservatism." Though Hook himself satirizes neo-conservatism as "Herbert Spencer Redivivus," the new philosophy follows more in the path of John Stuart Mill than that of Spencer. For Spencer, like Marx, still believed in a common world-formula that embraced both social and cosmological evolution. The scientific conservative, however, repudiates such totalistic reasoning even as he rejects Edmund Burke's antipathy to the scientist's probing into such basic questions as the source of the state's authority. And Hook remains a steadfast social conservative, "an unreconstructed advocate of the welfare state who believes its waywardness and abuses can be corrected." He would not make an absolute of either the free market or planned economy. Mindful from his own life's experience of what the human costs can be during the slow equilibrations of the competitive system—the people "thrown on the slag heap of the unemployed"—he is prepared to humanize the rigidities of the competitive order, even if its efficiency is thereby partially reduced, as well as to put into the private sector segments of the socialist society where initiative is lagging.

As a pragmatic conservative, Hook gently but powerfully disagrees with Solzhenitsyn, who believes that a transcendental religion is essential for confronting the Soviet totalitarian regime. The free world need not be disunited by a divergence on ultimate metaphysical questions; its paths can be charted according to diverse philosophies that nonetheless share a common direction.

Waiting for the Barbarians: Fiedler on the Roof

WHAT WAS LITERATURE? CLASS CULTURE AND MASS SOCIETY. *By Leslie Fiedler. Simon & Schuster. $15.50.*

Reviewed by VERNON YOUNG

Within the assigned limits of this review, I cannot hope to document extensively my belief that this is the most offensive, ill-informed, and incoherent study of any aspect of literature that I have read in years. Even if its arguments were half as cogent as their author believes them to be, *What Was Literature?* would remain virtually unreadable because of the undying spite with which it is expressed and the inverted masochism with which Mr. Fiedler exploits his bad taste and his alleged misgivings about his vocation.

His thesis is incredible, his demonstration of it wild: that a conspiracy has long been under way in the enterprise of education (for just how long I am uncertain, since its prove-

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nance shifts with every wind of Mr. Fiedler's war) in order "to help perpetuate an unfortunate distinction, a separation of song and story into High Literature and Low." He claims to find it

> an odd enough notion to "teach" [quotes his; for every such quote, count a sneer] the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Dickens and Twain, works written to move and titillate the free mass audience. . . . But it is even stranger to insist that while it is proper, indeed incumbent on us, to find such pleasure in Shakespeare, Dickens and Twain, it is shameful and regressive to respond similarly to Zane Grey, Edgar Rice Burroughs or Margaret Mitchell; and strangest of all to try to work out "critical" standards explaining why.

His proposition, if such a mass of non sequiturs can be graced with the term, is already so worthless that I fail to understand how a publisher's reader could have persevered beyond the first page. Mr. Fiedler has just sawed off the branch on which he has been sitting for forty years. To work out critical standards for explaining why one expression of the mind and the imagination is preferable to another is itself a definition of education. However, you can see for yourself that, before you can resort to so central a conception, you are involved from the author's first page with a host of auxiliary judgments that simply don't support what he thinks he's saying.

Neither the spectators of Shakespeare's plays nor the readers of Mark Twain's novels can with any accuracy be defined as a free mass audience, in the sense that today's TV watchers can be so described. By using "move and titillate," Fiedler is attempting to put down the deeper purposes of all three writers, so that in this context the only important point is that their work was generally *accessible* to a mass audience. That none of the three wrote *primarily* to titillate is concealed in this wording. For the rest, the mystery (here and all the way after) is the company Mr. Fiedler has kept: he is forever referring to a shadowy presence that constitutes authority, custom, pressure, and God knows what, as in the statement quoted above, "it is even stranger to insist." Who *does?* Would it be strange if someone *did* insist that it would be odd, to say the least, to react to Dickens or Mark Twain *in the same way* as one responds to Shakespeare? (They are centuries apart and one is a poetic dramatist.) To try following him further: it would be immature or hopelessly ignorant to perceive no distinction between, on the one hand, the fictions of Zane Grey and Edgar Rice Burroughs and, on the other, those of Shakespeare, Dickens, and Twain! Mr. Fiedler adds a final confusion by introducing into this witless comparison the author of *Gone with the Wind!* She is not to be ranked with Grey or Burroughs: they were popular tale-tellers who scarcely expected to be taken seriously. Margaret Mitchell did expect to be taken seriously.

Mr. Fiedler knows this; later in the book he bothers to analyze at some length the spuriousness of Margaret Mitchell's undertaking and her links with Thomas Dixon and Harriet Beecher Stowe. But always at the moment when he least needs to overload an argument, he adds another selling point, for all the world like an advertising hack on commercial television. Most of the time he resolutely fails to distinguish between good writing intended to be juvenilia, kitsch, formula stuff, and the garbage of the human mind. The root delusion upon which he insists is that a generation (two? four?—on all such particulars he is maddeningly vague) has been taught to distrust its own uneducated taste; what it popularly wants, in Mr. Fiedler's opinion, is what it should have, because the limitations of the young and the conditioned taste of the captive audience (which Mr. Fiedler interprets as *spontaneous!*) are more authentic than the increased pleasures of discrimination. For Mr. Fiedler, education is synonymous with manipulation. (By inference, the mass production of mental junk food is not!) Written on every page of Mr. Fiedler's book is the perverse itch to destroy aspiration. *Why?*

Transparently, part of his motive for writing this book, the greater part of it, is to relieve himself of the guilt by which he is obviously plagued for having been a teacher-critic-pedagogue for forty years, which means that he has earned a living ostensibly by making fine distinctions. He extends the guilt to an absurd remorse for having accepted review copies and free theater tickets.

> I and my peers, or at least those among us who have access to commercial journals, are rewarded a second time by being paid for registering in print our opinion of those books, movies and plays: opinions

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which *must* be (I sometimes uncomfortably suspect) radically different from the responses of those we address, precisely because, having bought the book or paid their way into the theater, they have an investment to protect.

The logic of these sentences is as weird as the bogus regrets they are extending. If the responses of a critic are radically different from those to whom he is addressing his remarks, it is *not* "precisely because" those others have a cash investment to protect but because, presumptively, the critic knows more about the medium than they do; he is a professional viewer, and it is no sin for him to labor in his vocation! He knows what he is looking at; he knows what he is experiencing. Mr. Fiedler doesn't want it that way. Criticism is *adverse* criticism; like education, it is never an act of discovery; it is manipulation.

The authors of this manipulation are much of the time a faceless crew to whom he refers alternatively as a "critical establishment," "elite critics," "emergent bourgeoisie," or "modern critics." By dint of repetition, he makes one sector abundantly clear. At least three times in these pages he complains of having been snubbed, when a lad, by his father. Hence it is not too surprising that the surrogates toward whom he feels most bitter are those he sees as disapproving paternal authorities. His principal hate-objects are Europeans-at-large; Englishmen (especially those who he believes speak with a BBC accent); a putative cluster of WASP teachers in colleges of the northeastern United States; and, beyond these, anyone who utters a disparaging opinion of, for example, Edgar Allan Poe, Longfellow, Stephen Foster, sundry science-fiction novelists unknown to me, and, unless they have listened first to *his* exegesis, those with a dim view of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Margaret Mitchell. If evidence for the depravity of this shadow cabinet is not forthcoming or is insufficiently persuasive to support his animus, unhesitatingly he falls back on slander.

It is sickening to read what I incidentally happen to know is not true: that T. S. Eliot's admiration of the music-hall singer Marie Lloyd smacked to him (Fiedler) "of 'camp' and condescension"; it is even more sickening to realize that Mr. Fiedler is not going to drop his grievance until, in one breathtaking

LOOKING AT AMERICA'S PAST

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sentence, he has accused Eliot of being a snob and a racist. In the chronology of anti-Eliot responses that has not unexpectedly followed reassessments of his reputation, nothing more contemptible will be found. It goes without saying that Henry James is another hydra head Fiedler is anxious to lop off.

> James was the first novelist to think of himself as writing in English the kind of novel read by a self-congratulatory minority audience, which in the name of the "standards" it embodies feels free to ignore books prized by the mass audience. . . . Those books include not just Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, but Rider Haggard's *She*, H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes*, L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*.

This sequence includes enough red herrings to stock an expressionist painting! What Mr. Fiedler is claiming—by elision, distortion, and guilt by association—is that Henry James recommended for oblivion a number of books written during a period of fifty years, few of which belonged in the same overall category. If Mr. Fiedler's kid brother, let's say, was never initiated into the world of Tarzan and the apes, it is because he was intimidated by Henry James! Mr. Fiedler resumes: "They [op. cit.] are read not only by members of the majority audience [then James's moratorium was *not* successful?] who are their chief consumers, but by members of the minority . . . some of whom sometimes sneak off to enjoy them behind closed doors or with the shades pulled down." *Some of whom sometimes?* Come off it, Mr. Fiedler. When was the last time you caught a certified member of the minority audience enjoying *Treasure Island* or *Gone with the Wind* or *The Wizard of Oz* with the shades pulled down—and if the shades were pulled down, how did *you* manage a look-in? (He knows a way.)

The further one tries to follow him through the dismal swamp of his contentions, the more one is convinced that Mr. Fiedler has no map of the territory he professes to know with his eyes shut. His several misapprehensions and canards and his maudlin self-exposure merit no extended debate. To summarize a few of his more salient fictions is chiefly to reveal a consistent adventure in the wilds of credibility. He believes that rhyme and meter have been virtually banned from contemporary poetry (in America, I suppose; Mr. Fiedler never implies that this great calamity is taking place elsewhere): in Ezra Pound's name, "aspiring young poets have been taught frantically [by whom? where?] to avoid rhyme, as well as traditional or indeed any clearly identifiable, easily scannable meters." (He's on the side of tradition, after all?) This is nonsense, every word. Among fifty good American poets, whom I can name if necessary, not more than five habitually shun rhymes or traditional guides to prosody.

Something Mr. Fiedler calls "the American school system," as if he lived under a soviet system, "has tried desperately to brainwash generations [how many?] into accepting as their own the dialect spoken by a handful of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in a few Eastern seaboard cities but the attempt has conspicuously failed." If it has conspicuously failed, why is he fretting?

Not the least peculiar contradiction wrung from Mr. Fiedler by his desire to shine as a cool analyst of doubtful literature and in the same breath tearfully to defend its right to exist is his clinching analysis of Alex Haley's *Roots* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, followed by a mystifyingly nervous retraction.

> Let me be quite clear. [That's all we ever asked of you, Leslie!] I am not *proud* of liking *Roots;* nor do I *approve* of what I feel obliged to acknowledge: all in myself which responds to all that is sentimental and sado-masochistic in it. I am, I must confess, still enough of a vestigial elitist to be ashamed of my vulnerability (and yours, *hypocrite lecteur*) [who dat said dat?] to so gross an appeal.

Class Culture and Mass Society? He never lays a glove on the conception. If he means anything by half, he means *group* culture; a class culture in America today, imposing high standards on an unwilling electorate, is a product of his paranoid contrivance. Patently, the real subject of *What Was Literature?* is Mr. Fiedler himself, weeping over a misspent career as critic-pedagogue, during which he has kept the wrong company and so faked what he feels and what he thinks that today he is no more confident of who he is than he was forty years ago. Like the speaker in C. P. Cavafy's poem, he is waiting for the barbarians (who would be some kind of solu-

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tion), without realizing that they have long since arrived and have converted him to their cause.

The Business of Education

ACADEMIC STRATEGY: THE MANAGEMENT REVOLUTION IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION. *By George Keller. Johns Hopkins University Press. $18.50. Paper, $8.95.*

Reviewed by DORIS L. EDER

George Keller's *Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education* takes on a touchy topic: the need for reform in academic administration. Keller launched his book himself this spring at a seminar on strategic planning at the American Association of Higher Education's annual conference in Washington. His is a concise, informed, bold assessment of the chronic deficiencies of academic administration as currently practiced on the majority of American campuses and a prescription for radically improving campus management so that colleges and universities may survive the difficult years ahead. After spending twenty-five years in higher education as a faculty member, dean, and assistant to several presidents and chancellors, Keller recently became senior vice-president of an institutional planning, marketing, and communications firm in Baltimore.

Academic Strategy is divided into two parts: first, a detailed description of the situation now prevailing in academe; second, several chapters outlining essential management methods for dealing with the situation and insuring the health and survival of colleges and universities. The situation confronting higher education, after a financially plush age that Keller defines as lasting from 1955 through 1974, is one of decline and depression. The period from 1974 through 1995 will be the reverse of the preceding growth period. Between the mid-fifties and mid-seventies, the student population tripled (increas-

DORIS L. EDER is professor of English at the University of New Haven.

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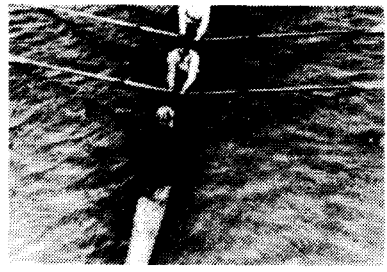

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ing from 2.5 to 8.8 million), the number of faculty more than doubled (from 266,000 to 633,000), and the number of terminal degrees conferred quadrupled (about 8,000 doctorates were awarded in 1955, 33,000 in 1974). What is projected now—and demographic projections are quite accurate—is a 25 percent decline in the full-time student population by the 1990s, with steeper declines in several mid-Atlantic and northeastern states, where out-migration of students compounds the problem. Thus, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York are anticipating decreases in full-time enrollment of 43 percent, and other states anticipate decreases of between 30 and 39 percent during the next decade. If, individually, character is fate, institutionally demography is destiny, as Keller says. Based on what has occurred during the past decade, it is forecast that between 10 and 30 percent of the nation's thirty-one hundred colleges and universities may be expected to close or merge by 1995. If these projections are correct, this means a total of anywhere from three hundred to nine hundred institutions of higher education will close their doors. There are already many campuses on which the fear of retrenchment or imminent collapse is palpable.

To understand how this has come about, it is necessary to recognize the changes that have occurred during the last ten to fifteen years in the student body, in educational costs and financing, in the faculty, and in academic governance. The picture is not unrelievedly dark; for those who know how to grasp them, there are opportunities not just to survive, but to flourish. Today's student population is more fluid and migratory and more varied in background, whether ethnic, social, or intellectual, than it was in the fifties or sixties. Still, because of increasing competition for students, a third of all colleges now admit 90 percent of their applicants. Not only are fewer full-time students seeking admission to college, but their high school performance and SAT scores have declined since the sixties. Only 20 percent of seventeen-year-olds score over 450 on the SAT; only 3 percent score 600 or more. Thus the competition is fierce among the Ivy League colleges for the best students. Fewer students now attend a single institution for four years.

Balancing the dearth of full-time students in their teens is a considerable increase in mature, part-time students. Indeed, 40 percent of American students are now part-time, and 36 percent are mature, aged twenty-five or older. The number of foreign students has also increased markedly from the seventies through the eighties, particularly at the graduate level. Such considerations should have considerable influence on recruitment, scheduling, instruction, and curriculum. However, as Keller points out, too few colleges have adapted to these shifts and changes in the market. Many are insufficiently aware of, or hospitable to, the needs of foreign students or of working people or homemakers returning to college part-time. As the number of college-bound eighteen-year-olds declines, the growing phalanx of mature people coming to college part-time—the continuing education market—represents higher education's best hope for the future.

Yet, as Patricia Cross and others have noted, higher education is lagging behind industry in catering to these people's educational needs by being unaccommodating, inflexible, and unimaginative in admissions, scheduling, and programming. Keller observes that an estimated twelve million such students are studying on campuses across the country, but that as many as seventeen million are taking courses off the campus, in offices, plants, and institutions such as Wang Laboratories and Arthur D. Little.

If the size and composition of today's student body have changed and diversified over the past couple of decades, the faculty has changed little. One of the peculiar occupational hazards of teaching is that, though professors age like everyone else, their clients or customers do not. A freshman class is perennially eighteen; unless one teaches students who are more mature (one of the pleasures of doing so being that they are both more experienced and often better motivated), the generation gap becomes ever more insistent and difficult to bridge. The graying and ossifying in tenure of faculties across the nation has resulted in an unfortunate immobility, sometimes accompanied by intellectual arteriosclerosis or stagnation. Faculty members—unless they are in growing fields and are therefore mobile, or are by nature energetic and given to compensating for physical stasis

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by mental exploration, and remain active in their professional development—suffer from constricted, threatened, dead-end careers.

A study by the National Center for Education Statistics reveals that one-third of the teachers in higher education are now part-time. This is a startling statistic, though the reasons are not difficult to find. Faculty salaries, in terms of real purchasing power, have declined along with the desuetude and disesteem into which education has fallen, and financial exigency has brought about retrenchment and an increasing reliance upon part-time adjuncts rather than full-time faculty. The flooding of the market with Ph.D.'s seeking teaching positions at a time when these are rapidly shrinking has created a whole generation of peripatetic scholar-gypsies, trying to eke out a living by teaching a course here and a course there, often at about one or two thousand dollars per course. While full-time faculty is immobilized, frozen in the tenure track, untenured part-time faculty is in perpetual motion from campus to campus.

In growth fields, such as computer science and some areas of science, technology, and engineering, a differential salary scale has developed in response to the need to secure hard-to-find expertise; experts are sometimes brought in from industry on a part-time basis. Thus, a two-tier salary system is developing, with the traditional liberal disciplines at the bottom and new high-technology fields at the top. Although Keller proposes many ways of coping with, reorganizing, and revitalizing a depressed profession, his sole recommendation for improving today's faculty is to make tenure yet more competitive by adopting national criteria, judging those up for tenure not just by comparison with their peers on campus but with scholars in their discipline nationwide. There are, however, other alternatives to tenure (see Richard P. Chait and Andrew T. Ford's *Beyond Traditional Tenure*), and there are other ways of improving faculty morale and performance, such as instituting more faculty exchange programs between different campuses and using grant monies to encourage faculty members to intern in industry or to do research or publish in their own or in new disciplines.

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cation from federal, state, and local governments has decreased, notably under President Reagan. The disenchantment and disillusion that followed the dilution, even debauching, of educational standards in the sixties has added to the difficulties faced by the profession in trying to rehabilitate itself. When tuition rises as fast and sharply as it has throughout the seventies and financial aid falls, as it has in the eighties, colleges and universities are caught in a double bind. Total costs for attending many Ivy League institutions are now twelve thousand dollars or more per year, and for the state institutions half to two-thirds of this amount. Thus parents may be faced with a bill for a child's college education of between twenty-five and fifty thousand dollars. Keller says that tuition nationally covers 60 percent of the cost of educating a student at the undergraduate level and 30 percent of the cost of educating a student at the graduate level.

The average cost of educating a student for a year (in 1967 constant dollars) has now stabilized at about $2,500. But universities are costly institutions to run, 80 percent or so of their budgets going for personnel salaries and fringe benefits, and very few of them have anything to fall back on in times of emergency such as we are currently experiencing. From *Academic Strategy* one learns that fewer than fifty universities and colleges have endowments larger than $100 million, and that fewer than two hundred have endowments of more than $10 million. Keller observes that nine-tenths of American colleges and universities are poised precariously on the brink of financial collapse.

This being the case, the need for expert financial and general management is critically evident. *Academic Strategy* indicates that, although power and responsibility are increasingly shifting to treasurers and vice-presidents, or deans of business, financial affairs and development, the administration of academe at large continues to be deplorably inefficient. Keller describes the management of America's colleges and universities as anarchic, archaic, uninformed, and unresponsive. It is largely an affair of passive, self-centered, inner-directed, and intuitive "muddling through" or laissez-faire. Keller views faculty governance as equivalent to none, for presidents wait upon faculties for consensus and action, but consensus is hardly ever to be reached among faculties or, if reached, is glacially, fatally slow. Faculty members habitually place themselves in the indefensible position of abdicating leadership while also refusing to concede it to the administration or chief executive. Such "dual leadership" cannot work, Keller says.

Keller's diagnoses of what ails academic administration are accurate and trenchant. There are few colleges and universities that can claim clear-sighted, farseeing, forceful, and courageous presidents. On the other hand, most colleges are handicapped by faculty senates that have degenerated into empty oratorical forums in which impotence addresses impotence and important decisions and policies are talked to extinction and allowed to dissipate into hot air. Keller is right in contending that academic finances and programming frequently appear curiously uncoupled, each going its own way, as treasurer and provost often do, one trying to spend what the other is trying to save. The answer, Keller says, is strategic management.

What is strategic management or planning? The term is borrowed from military and business campaigns. Its essence consists in an institution's staking out a distinctive, advantageous position in its field or market and maintaining this. To engage in strategic planning, Keller observes, a college or university must take stock of itself, its traditions and values, strengths and weaknesses, leadership abilities and priorities, and the threats and opportunities posed by its competitors and its environment. Strategy implies agreeing upon long-range objectives and devising a plan to attain them through effective use of resources. "The beginning point is self-consciousness for the organization. It is knowing the place for the first time, understanding what business you are in, or want to be in, and deciding what is central for the health, growth, and quality of the organization." The sine qua non of strategic planning is accurate information upon which to base decisions, to be followed by judicious decisions. Higher educational institutions can no longer afford to act or react blindly. Since the computer revolution, institutional research has assumed importance on campus; presidents and deans are greatly

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aided in decision making by accurate, up-to-date information on enrollments, program costs per student, and budget projections. Management information systems are as essential to administration as access to computer hardware, software, and research are to instruction in computer science, with its manifold applications in almost every field of human endeavor. For institutions that think they cannot afford to become computerized, computerized data bases and management information models are available on a cooperative, time-sharing basis.

Keller notes that a new cabinet style of management is emerging as presidents and chief academic officers choose key faculty, administrators, and members of the board to engage in long-range planning or form ad hoc committees to address budgetary, recruitment, or retention problems, for example, instead of leaving policy and decision making to time-honored but parochial or unwieldy bodies, such as departments or senates. Strategic planning steers a middle course between the old, "bottom-up," incremental kind of administration, with its partisan-political proclivities, and scientific management, with its hyper-rational economic and quantitative criteria. Keller notes:

> Because the politics and psychology are important, strategy making must be participatory, though not in a wide-open way. Several colleges have tried the Athenian forum approach, with disastrous results. But most of those with management responsibilities on campus need to be part of the meetings and deliberations. Nor should strategy making be done without constant pressures for decisions. Factual background materials, environmental reports, forecasts and financial likelihoods are imperative to pull people away from their own concerns, viewpoints and emotional preferences toward the larger world of historical, economic and educational reality and institutional purpose. . . . Participation is imperative. There need not be full consensus. There seldom is.

Keller believes education has much to learn from business and industry. He recommends that academe set aside venture capital to fund promising new projects, as the University of Michigan's Priority Fund was designed to do. Universities engaging in program evaluation may avail themselves of the Boston Consulting Group's model for analyzing portfolios by classifying investments into "stars" (signifying good growth potential and market), "cows" (indicating good market share without growth potential), "question marks" (good growth potential but poor market), and "dogs" (neither market nor growth prospects). Increased collaboration between academe and industry will benefit both, as more collaborative ventures among academic institutions will improve education. COFHE (the Consortium on Financing Higher Education) and the management information systems already cited are examples.

Academic Strategy includes interesting and inspiring case histories of institutions that, under capable, farsighted administrators, have embarked on long-range strategic planning that has turned them back into financially sound schools. Carnegie-Mellon University under President Richard Cyert is a model of financial and program planning that has made the most in every way of the early start it got on computer science in the fifties. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute was in dire trouble until George Ansell, the dean of engineering, and George Low, the new president,

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took it in hand, reorganized, and developed new initiatives with industry: R.P.I. is now one of the foremost technological universities in the United States. Brown University, under its vice-president, Richard Ramsden, has computerized alumni affairs and development, plant and energy systems, and many facets of student and academic affairs, with telling results. President Lawrence A. Cremin of Teachers College, despite dismal prospects for teacher education, an enrollment decline of one thousand students in eight years, and a faculty cut by fifty members, has shrewdly reshaped the College and redefined its mission as a "human resources development institution," committed to education for life, not just in schools and colleges, but in business and industry. President Colin G. Campbell of Wesleyan University, while preserving that institution's excellence in teaching, has also safeguarded it from bankruptcy by a decade's astute financial and curricular planning. Stephen J. Trachtenberg, inheriting a disparate collocation of schools in Hartford six years ago, has made a coherent institution of the University of Hartford.

No doubt influenced by such books as Francis E. Rourke and Glenn E. Brooks's *The Managerial Revolution in Higher Education* and his own experience, Keller overestimates the extent to which a managerial revolution is overtaking academe—though by no means does he overestimate the need for this to happen. He sees a new breed of academic administrators taking over. My experience as a faculty member and dean in private and public colleges and universities indicates that the new breed of academic administrators is much rarer than Keller supposes. Higher education has been disorganized and dysfunctional for two decades. The next two decades will witness a Darwinian struggle for survival in which those institutions adopting strategic management techniques are likeliest to prevail. That the fittest survive is important because, as Keller indicates, the United States is now increasingly a less industrial, more knowledge-based society, with only 17 percent of its labor force engaged in production and six million nonprofit organizations currently employing one in six of all workers. As Keller rightly puts it, in such a society universities are "the factories and cathedrals of our age."

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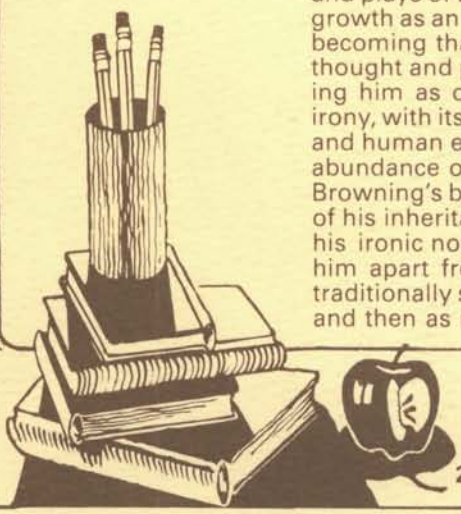

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